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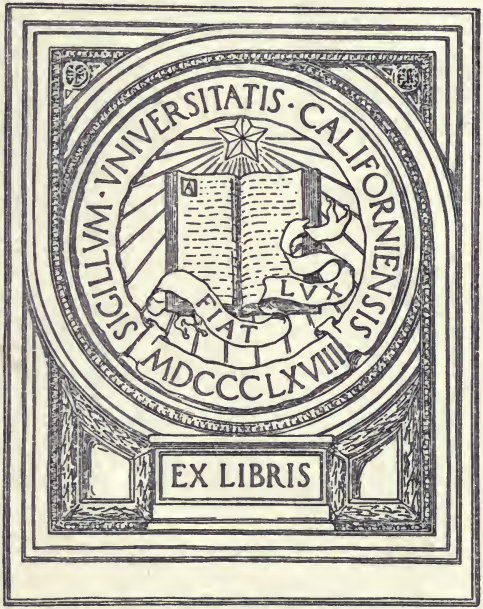

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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

MEMOIRS OF

TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN

BALZAC'S NOVELS.

Translated by Miss K. P. WORMELEY.

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MEMOIRS OF TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN.

ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
BOSTON.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

MEMOIRS OF TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN

ROBERTS BROTHERS

3 SOMERSET STREET

BOSTON

1894

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GIFT OF
John H Mc

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TO GEORGE SAND.

This dedication, dear George, can add nothing to the glory of your name, which will cast its magic lustre on my book; but in making it there is neither modesty nor self-interest on my part. I desire to bear testimony to the true friendship between us; which continues unchanged in spite of travels and absence, — in spite, too, of our mutual hard work and the maliciousness of the world. This feeling will doubtless never change. The procession of friendly names which accompany my books mingle pleasure with the pain and toil their great number causes me; for they are not written without pain and difficulty, to say nothing of the reproach now cast upon me for what is called my alarming fecundity, — as if the world which poses before me were not more fecund still! Would it not be a fine thing, George, if some antiquary of long past literatures should find in that procession none but noble names, true hearts, pure and sacred friendships, — the glories of this century? Ought I not to show myself prouder of that great and certain happiness than of other successes which are not indisputable? To one who knows you well it must ever be a great happiness to be allowed to call himself, as I do here,

Your friend,

De Balzac.

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MEMOIRS

OF

TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN.

FIRST PART.

I.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE.

PARIS, September.

MY DEAR DARLING, — I am out of school, too! and as you did not write me at Blois, it is for me to begin our charming correspondence. But there is nothing in this letter to make your beautiful black eyes sparkle; keep your exclamations for the one in which I shall confide to you my first love. People always talk of a first love; can there be a second? "Hush!" I hear you say; "instead of that, tell me how it is you have left the convent, where, when we parted, you expected to profess."

My dear, though the miracle of my deliverance did happen at the Carmelites, it was really the most natural

thing in the world. The qualms of a frightened conscience carried the day over the commands of inflexible family policy, that 's all. My aunt, who did not wish to see me die of consumption, conquered my mother, who had so long prescribed the novitiate as the only cure for that malady. The black melancholy which took possession of me after you left the convent hastened this happy escape.

So, here I am in Paris, my angel; and I owe to you the happiness of being here. My Renée, if you could but have seen me the first day I had to live without you, you would certainly feel proud to have inspired such deep sentiments in your friend's heart. We have so long dreamed together, we have spread our wings and imagined life so often, that our souls seem welded together, like those of the Hungarian sisters; you remember that story told us by Monsieur Beauvisage? — who certainly was not the man of his name! Was ever a convent doctor better chosen?

Have you been ill, my treasure, in order to keep your dear one company? In the dark depression our parting caused me I recognized, more than ever, the ties that unite us. I thought them severed by separation; I was seized with disgust for life, like some poor, lonely turtle-dove; I felt how sweet it would be to die, and I *was* dying, softly. To be alone in the Carmelite convent, a prey to the dread of having to profess with-

out tasting life like Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and without my Renée! oh, it was illness, mortal illness! That monotonous life — every hour bringing a duty, a prayer, a toil, all so precisely alike that one knows at any moment exactly what a Carmelite sister is doing the world over — that horrible life in which one grows indifferent as to whether the things about us are or are *not*, had become for you and me a varied world; our minds had no trammels, fancy bestowed upon us the key of her kingdoms. We were charming hippogriffs, mounting each other in turn, the lively one waking up the sleepy one, till our spirits frolicked together in the unknown, forbidden world. Even that dreary book, the "Lives of the Saints" helped us to understand many hidden things. But the day your dear company was torn away from me I became a Carmelite indeed, — that is, a modern Danaïde, who, instead of trying to fill a vessel full of holes, draws every day from some deep well an empty bucket, hoping to find it full. My aunt was totally ignorant of our inward life. She could not understand my disgust for existence; she believed the two acres of her convent ground a celestial paradise. The life of a nun, my darling, cannot be accepted at our age by any girl unless she has more simplicity of nature than belongs to you or me, or else that ardor of devotion which makes my aunt so sublime a creature. My aunt sacrificed herself to a beloved brother; but

how can any one sacrifice herself to unknown beings and ideas?

For the last two weeks I have buried so many wild meditations and speeches in my heart, I have had so many thoughts and experiences to tell that could only be told to you, that I truly think I should choke to death were it not for these written confidences which are now to take the place of our precious talks. Ah! how necessary the life of the heart is to us! I begin my journal this morning, imagining that yours is beginning for me at the same time, and that I shall before long live in your beautiful valley of Gémenos, of which I know nothing except what you have told me, just as you are going to live in Paris, of which you know nothing except what we have dreamed together and what I am going to tell you.

So, my dearest, on a beautiful morning marked with a rose-colored letter in my book of life, there arrived from Paris my mother's *dame de compagnie* and Philippe, my grandmother's footman, sent to take me home. When my aunt summoned me to her room, and told me this news I was speechless with joy; I looked at her stupidly.

"My child," she said, in her guttural tones, "you leave me without regret, I see that; but this is not a final farewell; we shall see you here again. God has marked your brow with the sign of his elect; you have

the pride that leads to heaven or hell, but you have also too much nobility of soul to fall to hell. I know you better than you know yourself. Passion will never be in you what it is in ordinary women."

She drew me gently to her, and kissed me on the forehead with that fire which consumes her, which blackens the azure of her eyes, droops her eyelids, furrows her ivory forehead, and discolors her lovely face. She made my flesh creep. Before replying, I kissed her hands.

"Dear aunt," I said, "if your adorable kindness has not made your Paraclete healthy to my body or sweet to my soul, I shall have to weep so many tears to force me back that I feel sure you will neither hope nor pray for my return. I shall never return, unless betrayed by my king — if I meet with one; and if I do, death alone can tear him from me; I fear no Montespan."

"Silly girl," she said smiling, "don't leave those ideas behind you; carry them away with you; and let me tell you that you are much more of a Montespan than a La Vallière."

I kissed her. The poor woman could not keep from following me to the carriage, where her eyes were as much fixed on the family armorial bearings as on me.

Night overtook me at Beaugency, still plunged in a sort of moral torpor brought on by this singular farewell. What was I really about to find in this world so much desired?

In the first place, no one was at home to receive me; all my heart preparations were wasted. My mother was driving in the Bois de Boulogne; my father was attending a council of ministers; my brother, the Duc de Rhétoré, never came home, they told me, till it was time to dress for dinner. Mademoiselle Griffith (good name, she certainly has claws) and Philippe conducted me to my apartment.

This apartment is the one that used to belong to my grandmother, the Princesse de Vaurémont, who left me a fortune as to which nobody has ever said a word to me. You will understand the sadness that overcame me on entering these rooms so full of my childish memories of that dear creature. The apartment is just as she left it; I was to sleep in the bed she died on. Sitting on the edge of her sofa, I wept without observing that I was not alone; I thought only of how often I had knelt at that very place to listen to her. I could see her face, swathed in rare old lace, and shrunken with the sufferings of her last illness. The room seemed to me still warm from the heated temperature in which she always kept it.

Why was it that I, Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu was obliged, like any peasant girl, to sleep in the bed of her grandmother almost on the day of the latter's death? — for I chose to fancy that the princess, who really died in 1817, had expired the night before.

The room contained many things which ought not to have been there; which proves that persons who are busy with state affairs do not attend to matters in their own home; and it also proves that as soon as the princess was dead no one thought any longer of that noble woman, who will always remain one of the grand female figures of the eighteenth century.

Philippe, her footman, seemed to understand, in a way, why I wept. He told me that the princess had bequeathed to me all her furniture and other belongings. My father had left the grand apartments in the condition to which the Revolution had reduced them. Remembering this, I rose and asked Philippe to open the door of the little salon which leads to the reception-rooms, and there I beheld the dilapidation which I remembered of old. The niches above the doors, which once contained fine pictures, were still empty, the marbles broken the mirrors taken away. In my childish days I used to be afraid to go up the grand staircase and cross the vast solitude of these high rooms, so that I usually went to the princess's apartments by the little staircase which led to the private door of her dressing-room.

Her apartment (the one that is now mine) consisting of a salon, one bedchamber, and the pretty dressing-room in scarlet and gold I told you about, is in the corner tower nearest to the Invalides. The house is separated from the boulevard by a wall covered with

climbing plants, which mingle their shoots with the foliage of the elms on the roadway. If it were not for the blue and gold dome and the gray walls of the Invalides, I might fancy myself living in a forest. The style of these three rooms proves them to be the former state apartments of the duchesses de Chaulieu; those of the dukes must have been in the tower at the other corner of the building, separated from each other by the main body of the house and the middle tower, in which are those vast, gloomy, and sonorous salons I mentioned just now, shorn of all their splendor, and the terror of my childhood.

Philippe put on a very confidential air on seeing my astonishment. My dear, in this diplomatic mansion even the servants are discreet and mysterious. He told me, under his breath, that they expected to pass a law by which the *émigrés* would recover the value of their lost property. My father is therefore postponing the restoration of the house until this restitution takes place. The king's architect estimates the cost at three hundred thousand francs. This confidential communication made me drop upon the sofa in my salon. So! my father, instead of employing that sum in marrying me, preferred to shut me up in a convent! That was the reflection which came to me on the threshold of my home life. Ah! Renée, how often I have told you, with my head on your shoulder, of the happy days

when my grandmother occupied these rooms. She exists only in my heart, and you are at Maucombe, five hundred miles away from me, — the only two beings who loved or have ever loved me! That dear old woman with a young heart always waked up when she heard my voice. We understood each other so well.

That recollection suddenly changed all my first impressions. I felt there was something sacred in what, at first, had seemed to me like profanation. I even thought it sweet to inhale the vague perfume of maréchale powder which lingers here, sweet to sleep under these curtains of gold-colored damask with white figures, where her eyes and her breath must have left something of her dear soul. I told Philippe to polish and restore the lustre of the furniture and to make the whole apartment habitable. I arranged the rooms to suit myself, giving to each piece of furniture its proper place. In taking possession I looked carefully over everything to see how best I could preserve these precious antiquities, which I love. Do you want to know what the rooms are like? The chamber is all in white, a little yellowed by time, and the gold of the frolicking arabesques is somewhat tarnished from the same cause; but these effects are in harmony with the faded colors of the Savonnerie carpet, given to my grandmother by Louis XV., who also gave her his portrait. The clock on the chimney-piece was a

present from the Maréchal de Saxe, and the porcelain ornaments beside it from the Maréchal de Richelieu. A portrait of my grandmother, taken when she was twenty-five, and now in an oval frame, hangs opposite to that of the king. The prince is not there. I like this frank neglect, without hypocrisy, which paints at one stroke her remarkable character. Once when she was very ill her confessor insisted that the prince, who was waiting at the door, should be allowed to enter. "Very well," she said, "with the doctor and his pills."

The bedstead is a four-poster with fluted canopy; the curtains are draped back in folds of splendid amplitude; the furniture is all of gilded wood, covered in yellow damask with white designs; the window-curtains are of the same material, lined with white silk of a kind which resembles *moire*. The panels above the doors are painted artistically, but I do not know by whom; one represents a sunrise, the other a brilliant moonlight. The fireplace is treated very curiously. It explains how in the last century they sat, literally, in the chimney corner. There the great events of the family took place. The brass fireplace is a marvel of modelling, the mantel of exquisite finish, the shovels and tongs of the finest workmanship, and the bellows delicious. The tapestry that covers the screen comes from the Gobelins, and is beautifully mounted; the fairy figures carved along the frame and on the fret

and bar are ravishing, — the workmanship as delicate as that on a fan. I wonder who gave her that dainty bit of furniture of which she was so fond; I wish I knew. How many times I have seen her with her feet on the bar, buried in her reclining chair, her dress raised nearly to her knees, taking up her snuffbox, replacing it, and taking it again from the little table on which it always stood between her box of pastilles and her silk mittens. How dainty she was! To the day of her death she took as much care of her person as she did when that beautiful portrait was made of her, and the flower of the king's court pressed around her. That reclining-chair, as I look at it now, reminds me of the inimitable movement she gave to her skirts when she threw herself into it. The women of her day have carried off with them certain secrets which painted their epoch. The princess had a turn of her head, a way of casting her words and looks about her, a peculiar language of her own, which have not descended to my mother. There was artifice and diplomacy in it all; at the same time kindliness, and design without a plot. Her conversation was prolix and yet laconic; she told a story well, and could paint an effect in three words. Above all, she had a freedom of judgment which has certainly influenced the cast of my mind.

From the time I was seven till I was ten years old I lived, as they say, in her pocket. She loved to have

me with her as much as I loved to be there. This liking was the cause of more than one quarrel between her and my mother. Now, nothing fans the flame of a sentiment as much as the cold wind of disapproval. With what a charm she used to say to me: "Ah! here you are, little mischief!" when that eel, curiosity, had lent me its motions to slip into her room. She knew I loved her, and she loved my childish love, which was like a sun-ray to her winter.

I don't know what went on in her rooms at night, but she received a great deal of company. When I crept on tiptoe in the mornings to see if her window shutters were opened, I found the furniture in the salon all out of place, the card-tables in confusion, and a great deal of tobacco scattered about.

This salon is in the same style as the bed-chamber. The furniture is curiously turned; the woodwork has hollow mouldings *à pieds de biche.* Garlands of flowers, richly carved and very graceful, twine about the mirror frames and fall in festoons over the glass. Two beautiful Chinese vases are on the pier-tables. The chief tone of the whole arrangement is scarlet and white. My grandmother was a glowing and piquante brunette, as you can easily guess from her choice of colors.

I have found a writing-table in this salon which used to take my fancy as a child; it is inlaid with

silver, chased and embossed, and was made for her by a man named Lommellini, of Genoa. Each side of this table represents the occupations of one of the four seasons; the figures are in relief, and there are hundreds in each division. I have spent two hours all alone, picking up my recollections, one after the other, in this sanctuary where one of the most celebrated women of Louis XV.'s court (at which all the women were celebrated for their wit or their beauty) lived and died. You know how suddenly and harshly they separated me from her in 1816.

"Go and say good-bye to your grandmother," my mother said to me one morning.

I ran to the princess; she was not surprised at my departure and seemed indifferent to it; her manner was the same as usual.

"You are going to the convent, my treasure," she said. "You will see your aunt, — an excellent woman. I shall take care that you are not sacrificed; you shall be independent, and able to marry whom you please."

She died six months later, after confiding her will to the most assiduous of her many old friends, the Prince de Talleyrand, who once, when making a visit to Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, took occasion to tell me that my grandmother forbade me to take the vows. I hope that sooner or later I may meet the prince, and then, I dare say, he will tell me more of what she said.

So you see, my darling, that although I found no one to receive me, I have consoled myself with the shade of the dear old princess. And I have also begun the fulfilment of our mutual agreement; which was, you remember, to tell each other the most trifling events of our lives and surroundings. It is so sweet to know where and how our dear ones live! Tell me everything — the least little things that happen around you, even to the sunset lights among the trees.

October 1.

I arrived here about half-past three in the afternoon. At half-past five Rose informed me that my mother had come in, and I went down at once to pay my respects. My mother occupies on the ground-floor an apartment which is arranged exactly like mine; both are in the corner tower, or pavilion. I am just above her and we both have the same private staircase. My father is in the pavilion at the other corner of the house; but as, at that end, there is a great deal of space which at ours is occupied by the grand staircase, his apartment is very much larger than either of ours.

Notwithstanding the duties of their position now laid upon them by the return of the Bourbons, my father and mother continue to live on the ground-floor, where there is plenty of room for the reception of guests, — so vast are the houses that our forefathers built.

I found my mother in her salon, where nothing had been changed. She was dressed for the evening. As I went down step by step, I kept asking myself how she would treat me — she who was so little of a mother to me that in all the eight years I had been in the convent she had written me but the two letters I showed you. Thinking it would be very false in me to pretend to an impossible tenderness, I made myself a kind of dutiful idiot, and entered her presence much embarrassed inwardly. But the embarrassment was soon over. My mother received me charmingly; she put on no false tenderness; neither was she cold; she did not treat me as a stranger, nor did she press me to her bosom as a long-lost daughter; she behaved exactly as if she had seen me the evening before, and felt to me as the kindest and sincerest of friends; she addressed me as if I were a grown woman, and kissed me on the forehead.

"My dear girl," she said, "if you were really dying in the convent it is, of course, better that you should live here with us. You disarrange your father's plans and mine; but the day has passed when children obeyed their parents blindly. Monsieur de Chaulieu's intention, which agrees with mine, is to neglect no means of making life agreeable to you and letting you see much of the world. At your age I should have felt as you do; therefore, of course, I cannot be angry with you; you could not understand what it was we wanted of

you. You will not find me absurdly severe. If you have doubted my heart toward you, you will soon find that you were mistaken. Though I wish to leave you at perfect liberty I think you will do wisely to listen, at first, to the counsels of a mother who intends to be a sister to you."

The duchess spoke in a gentle voice, arranging my pelerine as she did so. She fascinated me. At thirty-eight she is as beautiful as an angel. Her eyes are blue and black, the lashes silky, the forehead without a line, the complexion so perfect that a stranger might think she painted. Her shoulders and throat are marvellous; her waist as slender and flexible as yours; her hands are of rare beauty, white as milk, — the nails sparkle in the light, so polished are they; the little finger stands out a trifle from the rest, and the thumb is like ivory. Her foot is the equal of her hand; it is the Spanish foot of a Demoiselle de Vandenesse. If she is as lovely as this when nearly forty, she will still be a beautiful woman at sixty.

I answered her, my darling, like a good, submissive daughter. I was to her what she was to me; in fact, I was even better, for her beauty conquered me; I forgave her neglect. I began to see how such a woman was inevitably carried away by her rôle of queen. I told her so as candidly as I might have said it to you. Perhaps she did not expect to hear words of love from

the lips of her daughter. The sincere homage of my admiration seemed to touch her; her manner changed and became more winning than before. "You are a good girl," she said, "and I hope we shall always be friends." That speech seemed to me adorably naïve; but I took care not to show her that I thought so, — for I had instantly perceived that I must let her think herself much cleverer and more astute than her daughter. So I made myself a mere silly girl, and she was delighted with me. I kissed her hands a great many times, and told her how glad I was she treated me as she did. I felt so much at my ease with her that I even told her of my fears. She smiled and drew me to her by my neck and kissed me on the forehead very tenderly. "Dear child," she said, "we have company to dinner to-day, and I dare say you will agree with me that you had better wait till the dress-maker has properly arrayed you before you make your entrance into the great world. So, after you have seen your father and your brother, you will return to your own apartments." I agreed to that very heartily. My mother's enchanting toilet was a first revelation to the eye of that social world of our dreams, — yours and mine. My father presently came in. "Monsieur, this is your daughter," said the duchess.

My father's manner to me was very tender; he played his part of father so perfectly that I thought it

was sincere. "So here you are, my rebellious daughter!" he said, taking both my hands in his and kissing them with more of gallantry than paternity. Then he drew me toward him, passed his arm about my waist, and kissed me on the forehead and both cheeks. "You must atone for the injury your change of vocation is to the family by the pleasure your success in society will give us. You see, madame, that she will soon be a very pretty girl, of whom you may well feel proud. Here is your brother Rhétoré. Alphonse," he said to a handsome young man who now came in, "this is your sister, the nun, who cannot be persuaded to wear the habit."

My brother lounged up to me and shook my hand. "Why, kiss her!" said the duke. Then he kissed me on both cheeks. "I am delighted to see you, sister," he said, "and I am on your side against my father." I thanked him; but all the same I think he might have stopped in Blois to see me when he was on his way to Orléans to visit our brother, the marquis, in garrison. I now withdrew, fearing the company might arrive. I have made a few changes in my rooms, and have laid out on the scarlet velvet of my table all that I need for my letters to you, thinking meantime of the novelties of my position.

And now I have told you, my dear white darling, exactly, neither more nor less, how things have hap-

pened to me, a girl of eighteen, who has returned after an absence of nine years to the bosom of one of the most illustrious families in the kingdom. The journey had tired me; also the emotions of this return; so I went to bed, as we did in the convent, at eight o'clock, directly after supper. They have even given me the little Dresden china service the dear princess always used when the fancy took her to dine alone in her apartment.

II.

SAME TO SAME.

November 25.

THE next morning I found my apartments put in order by old Philippe, who had even filled the vases with flowers. In short, I am fairly installed. The only trouble was that no one remembered that a Carmelite novice was sure to be hungry at an early hour, and Rose had much trouble to get me some breakfast, "Mademoiselle went to bed just as dinner was served, and she got up this morning just as monseigneur was coming home for the night," she said.

About one o'clock my father knocked at the door of my little salon and asked if I could receive him. I opened the door; he came in and saw that I was writing. "My dear," he said, "you will wish to dress

suitably, and also to make yourself thoroughly comfortable in these rooms; you will therefore find twelve thousand francs in this purse. That is one year's allowance, which I advance to you for that purpose. You can arrange with your mother to find another companion if Miss Griffith does not suit you; for Madame de Chaulieu will not, of course, have time to be with you in the mornings. You will have a carriage at your orders, and a footman." "May I keep Philippe?" I asked. "Certainly," he replied. "Do not feel at all uneasy about money; your own fortune is large enough to keep you from being any expense to your mother or me." "Should I be very indiscreet if I asked to be told how large my fortune is?" I said. "Certainly not, my child," he answered. "Your grandmother left you five hundred thousand francs, the amount of her savings; for she would not deprive her family of a single inch of land. That sum is invested in the Funds. The accumulation of interest added to it now produces about forty thousand francs a year. I wished to employ that money in making a fortune for your second brother; therefore by refusing to become a nun you have upset all my plans; but perhaps you will concur in them later. I shall expect great things of you. You seem to me much more reasonable than I anticipated. I need not tell you how a Demoiselle de Chaulieu is expected to conduct herself; the pride I see in

your features is my surest guarantee. In our family the precautions lesser persons take about their daughters would be insulting to us. Mere gossip on your account would cost the life of whoever presumed to utter it, or that of one of your brothers if fate were unjust to them. That is all I need say to you on that head. Adieu, my dear little girl." Then he kissed me on the forehead and departed.

After persevering for nine years in this plan of giving my money to my second brother, I can't explain to myself why it should suddenly be abandoned. My father certainly spoke out frankly, in a way I like. There was no ambiguity in what he said. My property was about to be given to his son the marquis. Who has had bowels of compassion for me? Is it my mother? or my father? or my brother?

I remained seated on my grandmother's sofa, with my eyes fixed on the purse my father had laid on the mantel-piece, pleased and yet displeased by this attention, which fixed my mind on the question of money. It is true I need not think about it any longer; my doubts are solved; and there is something dignified in sparing my pride any suffering on that account.

Philippe was busy all day in going from one shop to another to produce my metamorphosis. A celebrated dress-maker named Victorine arrived; also a linen-maker and a shoe-maker. I am as eager as a child to

know what I shall look like when I emerge from the *sacks* of our conventual garments. But all these work-people require such an amount of time! The corset-maker insists on eight days, unless I mean to ruin my figure. That sounds serious; so I have "a figure," have I! Janssen, the opera shoe-maker, assured me positively that I had "my mother's foot."

I spent the whole morning in these important occupations. A glove-maker took the measure of my hand. The linen-maker came for my orders. At my dinner-time (which was that of the family breakfast) my mother informed me that we would go together to a milliner for my hats and bonnets, — so as to form my taste, and show me how to order for myself in future. I'm as giddy from this beginning of independence as a blind man must be when he gets his sight. I can judge now what a Carmelite is to a girl in society; the difference is so great that you and I never had the faintest conception of it.

During breakfast my father seemed absent-minded, and we left him to his thoughts; he is intrusted with many of the king's secrets. I was completely forgotten; but he will remember me whenever I can be useful to him — I saw that. My father is an attractive man, in spite of his fifty years. His figure is youthful and well-made; he is fair; his whole bearing is exquisitely graceful; his face has the speaking and yet mute expression

of a diplomatist's; his nose is thin and long; his eyes are brown. What a handsome couple they are! How many strange thoughts crowded into my mind as I saw clearly that these two beings, equally noble, rich, and superior, had nothing in common but their name; had no life together, and were merely united conventionally in the eyes of the world!

The élite of the court and the diplomatic circles were here last night. A few weeks hence I am to go to a ball given by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and be presented to the great world I want so much to know. A dancing-master is to come every morning, and I must learn to dance in a month, under pain of not going to the ball. Before dinner my mother had a talk with me about the governess, or companion. I said I would keep Miss Griffith, who was recommended to her by the Austrian ambassador. She is the daughter of a clergyman, and well brought up; her mother was a woman of rank; she is thirty-six years old, and will teach me English. The Griffith is still good-looking enough to have certain pretensions; she is poor and proud and Scotch; she is to be my chaperone, and will sleep with Rose; Rose is under her orders. I saw at once that I could govern my governess. During the six days that we have now been together she has found out that I alone take an interest in her; and I have just as thoroughly understood, in spite of her marble face, that

she will be very complying to me. I think she is a kind creature, though terribly discreet. I have not been able to find out what has passed between herself and my mother.

Here's another thing which seems of no great consequence. My father has declined the ministry which was offered to him. It was that which made him so absent-minded last night. He says he prefers an embassy to endless discussions on public affairs. He wants Spain. I heard all this at breakfast, — the only moment of the day when my father, mother, and brother see each other with any sort of intimacy. The servants only come in when rung for. The rest of the time my brother, like my father, is out of the house. My mother dresses; she is never visible between two and four o'clock. At four she goes out for an hour's drive; she receives from six to seven when she does not dine out; and her evenings are spent in some kind of pleasure, — the theatre, balls, concerts, visits. In fact, her life is so full I don't believe she ever has a quarter of an hour to herself. She must spend a good deal of time on her toilet in the mornings, for she is divinely beautiful at breakfast, which is served between eleven and twelve o'clock. I begin to understand the sounds I hear in her apartments, which are below mine. She takes an almost cold bath when she rises, and a cup of coffee, cold, with cream; then she dresses. She is

never awake before nine, except under extraordinary circumstances. In summer she goes out early on horseback. At two o'clock she receives a young man whom I have not yet seen.

That 's our family life. We meet at breakfast and dinner, though sometimes my mother and I take the latter meal alone; and I fancy I shall often have to dine in my own apartment with Miss Griffith, like the princess, for my mother has many invitations to dinner. I no longer wonder at the little interest my family have taken in me. My dear, in Paris there is a sort of heroism in loving those who belong to us, for we don't belong to ourselves. And how easy to forget the absent in the whirl of such a life. I see that, and yet I have not set foot out of doors and know nothing of it; I shall wait till I am less of a rustic and my dress and manner are more in keeping with this great world, whose rush amazes me though I only hear the echo of it from afar. Up to this time I have not been beyond the garden.

The Italian opera begins in a few days; my mother has a box. I am crazy to hear Italian music and to see French opera. I am beginning to shake off convent habits and am learning those of the great world. I am writing to you just before going to bed; and my bedtime is now as late as ten o'clock, the hour when my mother goes out, — unless, to be sure, she goes to some

theatre. Just think, there are twelve theatres in Paris! I read a good deal, but in a desultory way; my ignorance is crass. One book leads to another. I find the titles of several books on the cover of the one I am reading; but I have no one to tell me how to choose, and I find some of them very stupid. All that I have read of modern literature so far turns on love, — the subject you and I used to talk of so much; for is n't our fate made for us by man and for man? But oh! my dearest, how far these writers are beneath the ideas of two little girls named Renée and Louise! My angel! such trivial events, such queer behavior, and then, such mean and paltry expressions of feeling! Still, I have liked two books very much. One is called "Corinne," the other "Adolphe." Apropos of that, I asked my father if I could see Madame de Staël. My mother and father and Alphonse laughed. Alphonse said: "Where does she come from?" My father replied, "From the Carmelites, and we are silly to laugh." "My dear," said the duchess, gently, "Madame de Staël is dead."

"How can a woman be deceived?" I asked Miss Griffith when I finished "Adolphe." "Because she loves," replied Miss Griffith. Renée, do you think a man could deceive either you or me? Miss Griffith has ended by finding out that I am not more than half a fool, and that I really have a hidden education, — that

which you and I gave ourselves by discussing everything in heaven and earth. She sees that my ignorance is chiefly about external things. The poor creature has opened her heart to me. That laconic answer I mentioned above, set in the balance against various imaginable misfortunes, made me quiver. La Griffith warned me not to let myself be dazzled by what I was about to see of the world; to distrust everything, especially that which pleased me most. That 's all she knows, and she can't tell me anything more. It is very monotonous. She is like a bird with one note.

III.

SAME TO SAME.

December.

My treasure, — Here I am, all ready to enter the great world; and I have been as silly as I can be in making ready for it. This morning, after much practising, I beheld myself duly and properly shod, corseted, laced, curled, dressed, and decorated. I was like a duellist before fighting; I practised with closed doors. I wanted to see myself under arms, and I was pleased enough to find I had a little triumphant and vanquishing air, which, I flatter myself, will be all-conquering. I examined and judged myself severely

I reviewed my forces, — putting in practice that fine maxim of antiquity: "Know thyself." I assure you I had much pleasure in making my own acquaintance. Griffith alone was in the secret of this doll's-play. I was doll and child in one. You think you know me? Well, you don't!

Here, Renée, is the portrait of your friend, formerly disguised as a Carmelite and now brought to life as a frivolous and worldly girl. Provence excepted, I am one of the handsomest creatures in France. Take that as the summing up of the present chapter. I have defects; but if I were a man I should fall in love with them. These very defects promise a great deal. When for more than two weeks one has daily admired the exquisite plumpness of a mother's arms, it is rather discouraging to see one's own as thin as sticks; but I console myself by knowing that the wrists are delicate, and the lines so soft that when the flesh fills up the hollows my arms will be as dimpled, round, and satiny as hers. The shoulders follow suit as to thinness; or rather, to tell the truth I have no shoulders, nothing but hard blade-bones which form two flat angularities. My waist has no flexibility, and the hips are rigid. Ouf! there! I've told the worst. On the other hand, this framework is delicate and firm, and health sends a pure, bright glow through the vigorous outlines; the blue blood of life flows in waves beneath a skin that is

almost transparent. Yes, and the fairest daughter of Eve is a negress beside me, and my foot is that of a gazelle, and all the outlines are delicate, and my features are purest Greek! There, mademoiselle! The flesh-tones don't blend very well, that's true; but they are brilliant; I'm a very pretty green fruit, and I have the charm of greenness. In fact, I am like that face in my aunt's old missal, — don't you remember? — which rises from a crimson lily.

To continue, — my blue eyes are not stupid, they are proud; two mother-of-pearl lids with blue veins, fringed with silken lashes, surround them. My forehead is dazzling; and the hair, delightfully planted, is arranged in little waves of pale gold, darker in the masses, showing that I am not a faded, fainting blonde, but a Southern fair one, full of blood, vigorous to act and not be acted on. The hair-dresser wanted to plaster it down in two bandeaux and put a pearl hanging to a gold chain round my forehead, declaring that it would give me a look of the middle-ages! As if I wanted to be of any age but what I am!

My nose is thin, the nostrils well cut and separated by a very pretty pink partition; it is an imperious nose, rather scoffing, and its tip too nervous ever to grow coarse or red. In short, my dear darling, if my perfections are not enough to marry a girl without a dowry, I'm mistaken. As for my ears, they are charm-

ingly modelled; a pearl at each tip looks yellow in them. My throat is long, and has the serpentine movement which gives such majesty; when in shadow it has golden tints. Ah! I do think my mouth is too large, — but it is very expressive; the lips are a fine color, and the teeth smile charmingly! And then, my dear darling, all is in harmony, — carriage and voice and everything! I try to remember how my grandmother swung her petticoats without ever touching them. I know I am handsome and graceful enough to follow my own fancies; I can laugh just as you and I used to laugh, and yet be respected. I can be merry and gay, and yet imposing. I shall know how to lower my eyes, and pretend to an icy heart behind that snowy brow. I can turn that swan-like neck like a melancholy madonna, and the virgins the painters paint will be leagues beneath me; for you know, Renée, I shall be far above them among the stars. When men speak to me they will be forced to modulate their voices.

So, my dear, I am armed at all points, and I can run the gamut of coquetry from bass to treble, from the solemn tones to the flute-like notes. It is an immense advantage not to be too uniform. My mother is neither gay nor virginal; she is exclusively dignified and imposing; she can only come out of that to make herself leonine; when she wounds she does not

know how to heal; but as for me, I 'll wound and heal both. I am totally different from my mother; therefore we cannot clash, — unless we quarrel about the perfection of our feet and hands, which are exactly alike. I take after my father; he is supple and delicate. I have the manners of my grandmother and her tone of voice, — a head-voice when raised, but a melodious chest-voice in a *tête-à-tête*.

Renée! it seems to me as though I had only just left the convent. I am not yet of the world, I am all unknown to it. What a delicious moment! I still belong to myself, — like a flower just blooming and yet unseen. My angel, my darling! as I walk my salon looking at myself in the glass, seeing the innocent, ingenuous cast-off garments of the novice, the schoolgirl, there is something in my heart, — I know not what, — regrets for the past, anxieties for the future, fears of the world, of society, farewells to our white daisies, innocently gathered, carelessly stripped of petals. Ah! there was much in all that, *but* there were also fantastic ideas, which I here and now drive back into the depths of my soul, — where I dare not descend, and from which they came.

My darling, I have an outfit worthy of a bride! All my new possessions are laid in perfumed drawers of cedar-wood in my delightful dressing-room. I have ribbons, gloves, boots, and shoes in profusion. My

father has given me the jewels of a young girl, a work-table, dressing-case, perfume-bottles, fan, parasols, prayer-book, a gold chain, and a cashmere shawl. He promises to have me taught to ride on horseback. I already know how to dance! To-morrow, yes, to-morrow night, I am to make my first appearance. My dress is a gown of white muslin, with a wreath of white roses arranged in the Greek style. I shall assume my *madonna air*, for I want to seem simple-minded and get all the women on my side.

My mother is a thousand leagues from suspecting what I write to you; she thinks me incapable of reflection. My brother honors me with ineffable contempt, and shows me all the kindness of his indifference. He is a fine young man, but whimsical and melancholy. I've detected his secret, though the duke and duchess seem not to know it. Though a duke himself and young, he is jealous of his father; he feels he is nobody in the State; he has no position at court; he can't say, "I am going to the Chamber." Yes, I have guessed his secret, but then, to be sure, I am the only one at home who has sixteen hours daily for reflection. My father is deep in public business and pleasures; my mother just as busy with society; no one reacts upon me in the household, for they are always out; they don't seem to have time enough to live. I'm exceedingly curious to know what invincible attraction there

can be in social life to keep people out of their homes till two or three in the mornings, and compel them to take such trouble and endure such fatigue.

When I longed so much to come here, I never imagined such household estrangement or such intoxicating occupations. Now I know that members of a family may live together and not know each other. A girl who is half a nun arrives, and in two weeks she discovers more than the statesman himself knows of his own household. Perhaps he does see it, though, and pretends to this paternal blindness; that's another mystery to clear up.

IV.

SAME TO SAME.

December 15.

Yesterday, at two o'clock, I went to drive in the Champs-Élysées and the Bois de Boulogne, on one of those glorious autumn days you and I have so often enjoyed on the banks of the Loire. I then saw Paris for the first time. The whole scene of the place Louis XV. is truly glorious, but the glory is of man's making. I was well-dressed, demure, though inclined to laugh, with a calm face under a pretty bonnet, and my hands folded. No one smiled at me, and not the smallest

little man stood thunderstruck on his legs or even turned round at sight of me; and yet the carriage moved along with a slowness quite in keeping with my dignified pose. Stay! I'm mistaken; a charming duke did pass and turn his horse round abruptly; and that man, who thus saved my vanity, was my own father, whose pride, as he told me, was much flattered by my appearance.

I also met my mother, who sent me a pretty greeting, like a kiss, with the tips of her fingers. The Griffith, who was quite unconcerned, gazed about her on all sides; for my part, I think a young woman ought always to know where she looks. One man stared at my carriage, but not at me; he may have been a carriage-maker. I think I deceived myself as to the value of my charms; beauty, that rare privilege given by God only, must be more common in Paris than I thought. I noticed that mincing and coquettish women were much noticed. My mother, too, was immensely admired. There is some meaning in all this, and I shall find it out.

The men, I must tell you, dearest, struck me, in general, as very ugly; and I don't know what fatal genius invented their clothes, which are really amazingly awkward, when one compares them with those of mankind in previous centuries. The present dress is minus color, effectiveness, or poesy; it speaks neither to the

senses nor the eye nor the intellect; and it must be very uncomfortable, it is so pinched and skimping. The hat strikes me particularly; it is the section of a column, perfectly stiff, and does n't take the shape of the head; but they tell me it is easier to make a revolution than to improve the style of men's hats. The manhood of France recoils at the idea of wearing a soft felt hat, and so, for want of one day's courage, it condemns itself to a lifetime of that ridiculous chimney-pot. And yet they say Frenchmen are volatile! But the men themselves are perfectly horrible, whatever they wear on their heads. I have seen such hard and weary faces, — faces in which there is neither calmness nor tranquillity; the lines all clash, and the wrinkles tell of balked ambitions and mortified vanity; a noble brow is rarely seen. "So these are Parisians!" I said to Miss Griffith. "Very amiable and witty men," she replied. I held my tongue. A spinster of thirty-six must have lots of indulgence in the depths of her soul.

In the evening I went to my first ball, and stayed close to my mother, who gave me her arm with a devotion that was well rewarded, for she carried off all the honors. I was a mere pretext for agreeable flatteries to her. She had the cleverness to make me dance with idiots who told me how hot the room was, as if I were frozen, and talked of the beauty of the

ball, as if I were blind. They all expatiated on the strange, unheard-of, singular, and extraordinary event of seeing me in society for the first time. My dress, with which I was delighted when I paraded up and down my white and gold salon all alone, now seemed hardly noticeable among the marvellous toilets of the other women. Each of those women had her attendant satellites; but they all watched each other out of the corners of their eyes; some, like my mother, were resplendent in beauty.

A young girl counts for nothing at a ball; she is only a machine to dance with. The men, with few exceptions, seemed to me no better than those I saw in the Champs-Élysées. They look worn out; their features have no character, — or rather, they all have the same character. The proud and vigorous faces I see in the portraits of our ancestors — they who joined moral strength to physical strength — exist no longer. There was present, however, a man of great talent who certainly stood forth from the rest on account of his personal beauty; but he did not give me the keen sensation I expected. It is true that I have not read his works, and he is not a nobleman. No matter what the genius of a bourgeois or a parvenu may be, I confess my blood does n't tingle for such as they. Besides, I thought this particular man of talent so full of himself and so oblivious of others that it struck me

we must all be things, not beings, to these great hunters for ideas. When men of talent love they ought to cease writing, *or* — they don't love ; something in their brain takes precedence of their mistress. I thought I saw all that in the behavior of this man, who is, they tell me, a professor, speaker, author, but whose ambition makes him the servant of all grandees.

Well, I soon decided on my own course. I thought it was very unworthy of me to be angry with the world for my want of success ; and I began to dance without troubling myself any more about it. The fact is, I love dancing. I heard all sorts of stupid gossip going on about the unknown persons around me. It seemed to me without any point ; but perhaps I needed to know certain things in order to comprehend it, for I noticed that most of the men and women took the keenest pleasure in saying and hearing particular speeches. Society evidently has a host of enigmas the solution of which seems rather difficult, — a multiplication of intrigues ! I have sharp eyes and keen ears, and as to my inward perceptions, *you* know about them, Mademoiselle de Maucombe.

I came home tired, and glad to be tired. I told what I thought and felt very candidly to my mother, who was with me; and she requested me to confide such things to no one but herself. " My dear girl," she said, " good taste is shown as much in knowing what

things we may not speak of as in speaking properly of those we may."

This bit of advice taught me to understand what feelings we ought to keep silence about to all the world, beginning with our mother. I took in at a glance the vast extent of female dissimulation. My darling, I do assure you that, thanks to our brazen innocence, you and I can be two very wide-awake little spies. How much may be discovered from a finger laid on a lip, a word, a look! And yet my mother's caution made me timid in a moment. What! can't I even express the natural delight I feel in dancing? If so, thought I, what becomes of the utterance of real feelings? I went to bed quite sad. I am still under the shock of this first encounter of my frank, gay nature with the hard laws of the world. There 's a shred of my white wool already left on the bushes by the wayside.

Adieu, dear angel.

V.

RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

October.

How your letter moves me, — especially when I compare our fates. What a brilliant world you are about to live in! and in what a peaceful retreat am I destined to pass my obscure existence!

Two weeks after my return to Maucombe (I have told you so much about the château that I will tell you no more, except that I found my room just as I had left it, and am now able to enjoy the glorious view of the valley of Gémenos which I looked at as a child without really seeing), — two weeks after my return my father and mother, accompanied by my two brothers, took me to dine with one of our neighbors, Monsieur de l'Estorade, an old nobleman who has become very rich, as people do grow rich in the provinces, by saving. This old man was unable to save his only son from Bonaparte's rapacity. After buying him off from the conscription he was forced to let him join the army in 1813, as member of the Guard of Honor. After the battle of Leipzig the old baron heard no more of his son. Monsieur de Montriveau, to whom he applied for information, declared that he had seen the young man taken prisoner by the Russians. Madame de l'Estorade, the mother, died of grief after a search in Russia had proved fruitless. The baron, who is truly religious, practised the noble virtue you and I used to cultivate at Blois, — hope! Hope showed him his son in dreams, and he saved his income and his wife's property in the interests of that lost son.

No one ever dared to make light of that hope, which is now justified; and I have discovered that the unexpected return of the son from Russia is the real cause

of my return from the Carmelites. How little we imagined, when our thoughts went wandering everywhere, that my future husband was slowly and painfully making his way on foot across Russia, Poland, and Germany. His hardships did not end until he reached Berlin, where the French ambassador facilitated his return to France. Monsieur de l'Estorade, the father, a small country land-owner in Provence, was not of sufficient consequence in Europe to make his son's name a passport.

The old man has lately bought a fine, though much neglected estate, which he intends to plant with mulberries from his own nurseries; and this, with the income from the mother's property, will give the Chevalier de l'Estorade a handsome fortune. The baron now has but one idea, that of marrying his son, — marrying him, I mean, to some girl of rank. My father and mother entered into his plans as soon as he told them his desire to obtain Mademoiselle Renée de Maucombe without a dowry for his son, and that he would settle upon her in the marriage contract the full sum that they might leave to her in their wills. At the time my youngest brother, Jean, came of age, he signed an acknowledgment of having received from his parents a sum equivalent to one third of their inheritance. That is how the noble families of Provence evade the infamous civil Code of the Sieur Bonaparte, which will

consign more girls to the convent than it will ever marry. The French nobility is, however, as far as I can make out, divided in opinion on this subject.

This dinner, my darling, as you have already imagined, was arranged to introduce your Renée to the exile. Our servants all wore their gala liveries and their gold-laced hats; the coachman put on his high top-boots; all five of us got into the old state coach, and arrived with much majesty before two o'clock (dinner being at three) at the manor-house of the Baron de l'Estorade. The old gentleman has no château; it is a simple country-house, standing at the foot of a hill and looking up our beautiful valley, the pride of which is, undoubtedly, the old castle of the Comtes de Maucombe.

This establishment is simply, as I say, a manor-house. The walls are of rubblestone in mortar, stuccoed with yellow cement, and roofed with hollow tiles of a fine red color. The windows, placed without regard to symmetry, have enormous outside shutters, painted yellow. The garden, which surrounds the building, is a true Provence garden, enclosed by low walls built of round pebbles laid in courses; an iron gate at the entrance on the high-road gives a somewhat baronial air to the place, though I must say it is rather thin and reminds me of Sister Angélique. The house has a stone portico with a miserable awning, and the garden,

shrubs, and trees are horribly dusty and neglected. It is easy to see that the old baron has just vegetated from day to day, with no other thought than of piling up his savings for his son. He eats the same food as his two servants, — a Provençal youth, and his wife's former maid.

The rooms are scarcely furnished. Nevertheless, the whole house was furbished up in our honor, and the dinner was served on the family plate, much embossed, and blackened by time. The exile, my dear darling, is thin, oh! as thin as that railing. He is pale, he is ill, he is taciturn. At thirty-seven years of age he looks to be fifty. The ebony of his ex-fine hair is threaded with white like a lark's wing. His beautiful blue eyes are cavernous; he is a little deaf, which gives him some resemblance to the Knight of the Sad Countenance. Nevertheless, I have graciously consented to become Madame de l'Estorade, and to allow myself to be dowered with two hundred and fifty thousand francs, but on the express condition that I shall be mistress of the manor-house and be allowed to make a park around it. I have also requested my father to make over to me a little water-course which can be made to lead from Maucombe here.

In a month I shall be Madame de l'Estorade; for I found favor with the exile, my dear. After the snows of Siberia, a man could hardly fail to like a pair of

black eyes which, as you used to say, ripen the fruits they look at. Louis de l'Estorade seems much pleased to marry "the beautiful Renée de Maucombe," — that is the glorious appellation of your old friend the Carmelite novice. While you are preparing to harvest the delights of a grand existence, that of a Demoiselle de Chaulieu, in the Paris where she reigns, I, your poor little white doe, Renée, daughter of the desert, have fallen from the empyrean where we flew, into the vulgar realities of a fate as humble as that of a daisy.

Yes, I have sworn to myself to console this poor young man who has had no youth, who went from his mother's lap to the hardships of war, from the joys of home to the ice and toil of Siberia. The monotony of my days to come will be varied with country pleasures, humble, it is true, but pleasures still. I will extend the oasis of the valley of Gémenos to my new home, and I will make a shady park about me. I will have lawns that are always green, coverts on the hillside, and at the highest point of all I will build a pretty kiosk and see from thence the sparkling Mediterranean. Orange and lemon trees and all the choicest productions of botanical nature will embellish my retreat, and — I shall be a mother. Yes, a natural, indestructible poesy will surround us. By remaining faithful to my duties I shall have nought to fear. My religious feelings are fully shared by my father-in-law and the Chevalier de l'Estorade.

Ah! treasure mine, I see life stretching before me like one of those great high-roads of France, straight and even, shaded by the eternal trees. There will not be another Bonaparte in this century, and I can keep my children, if I have them, with me; I can train them, educate them, make men of them, and find my life in theirs. If you do not fail of your destiny you will be the wife of one of the powerful of this earth, and the children of your Renée may look to you for protection.

So, then, farewell, for me at least, to all those high romances and strange vicissitudes of which you and I, my dearest, were once the heroines. I know in advance the history of my life; it will be traversed by great events, — the cutting of the Messieurs de l'Estorade's teeth; their food, their clothing, the mischief they will do in my new plantations. To watch their dawning lives, to embroider their caps, to be loved and admired by a poor sick man whose comfort I am, and to look up ever into the valley of Gémenos, — those are to be my pleasures. Perhaps this countrywoman may some day live in winter at Marseille; but that's a narrow, provincial stage which offers no danger.

No, I shall have nothing to fear, — not even one of those admirations which make us justly proud. We shall be interested in the silk-worms for whose benefit we sell our mulberry leaves. We shall know the ups

and downs of provincial life and the tempests of a household where quarrels are impossible, for Monsieur de l' Estorade makes known his intention of being guided by his wife. Now, as I shall do nothing to confirm him in that great wisdom, he will probably persist in it.

You will be, my dear Louise, the one romantic spot in my existence. Therefore tell me all your experiences; describe the balls and fêtes, and how you dress, and what flowers crown that dear blond hair. Tell me, too, all that men say and do; describe their ways. I shall be your double as you listen and dance; I shall feel when your hand is pressed; I shall hear you laugh. Ah! we shall often change places; I shall amuse myself in Paris, while you are the mother at La Crampade — for that, by the bye, is the name of my future manor. Poor Monsieur de l'Estorade, who thinks he is marrying only one woman! Will he find out that he has married two? Oh! what nonsense I am talking. Let me kiss you on both cheeks, — my lips are mine still; he has never ventured to do more than take my hand. I assure you we are most respectful; in fact, our conventionality is quite distressing. There! nonsense again! Adieu, dearest.

P. S. I have just received your third letter. Dear Louise, I have about a thousand francs to do what I like with; will you spend them for me in pretty things

for my new home which I can't get here or even at Marseille? While shopping for yourself think of the poor recluse at La Crampade; remember that I have no one of taste in Paris to make my purchases. I will answer your third letter very soon.

VI.

DON FELIPE HENAREZ TO DON FERNANDO.

PARIS, September.

THE date of my letter will show you, my dear brother, that the head of your house is no longer in any danger. If the massacre of our ancestors in the Court of Lions made us Spaniards and Christians whether we would or not, at any rate it bequeathed to us the prudence of Arabs; perhaps I now owe my safety to the blood of the Abencerrages which flows in my veins.

Fear made Ferdinand VII. so good a comedian that Valdés believed in his protestations. If it had not been for my cautions, the poor admiral would have been lost. The liberals will never learn what a true king is. The character of this particular Bourbon has been known to me for a long time; the more his Majesty assured us of his favor, the more I distrusted him. A true Spaniard never needs to repeat his promises. Whoso says much means to deceive.

Valdés escaped on board of an English vessel. As for me, as soon as the fortunes of my dear Spain were lost in Andalusia, I wrote to the bailiff of my property in Sardinia to provide for my safety. He sent some wily coral-fishers to await me off a certain point of the coast. While Ferdinand was exhorting the French to make sure of me, I had safely reached my estate of Macumer, and was living in the midst of bandits who defy all laws and perpetrate all vengeances. The head of the last Spanish-Arabian house of Grenada found himself in deserts equal to those of Africa, and mounted actually upon a barb in the great domain which has descended to him from the Saracens. The eyes of my bandits shone with joy and savage pride when they discovered that they were protecting their master, the Duc de Soria, an Henarez, from the vengeance of the king of Spain. I am the first of our family who has visited the island since the days when it belonged to our ancestors the Moors. Twenty-two carbines were instantly offered to annihilate Ferdinand de Bourbon, son of a race all unknown when our forefathers the Abencerrages came as conquerors to the banks of the Loire.

I expected to be able to live on the revenues of this great domain, which, alas! we have so ill cared for; but I soon found out my mistake and the veracity of Queverdo's reports. The poor man has twenty-two lives of men at my service, but not one copper farthing;

twenty thousand acres of plain and meadow, but not a dwelling; virgin forests, and not one article of furniture. Six million of francs and the presence of a master for half a century would be necessary to put these magnificent lands to any profit. I shall, however, think about it; refugees have plenty of time to think over their own affairs as well as over their lost cause.

At Marseille I heard of Riego's death; the painful thought came to me that my life, too, would end slowly, obscurely, in just such a martyrdom. Will it be living at all to have no country for which to consecrate myself, no beloved woman to exist for? "To love and conquer" — two aspects of one idea — was the law graven on our sabres, written in letters of gold on the arches of our palaces, sung and resung incessantly by the plashing waters of our fountains in their marble basins, — a law which evermore will uselessly incite my soul; for the sabre is broken, the palace in ashes, the living waters of the fountain are lost in the sterile sands.

Here, my dear brother, is my last will and testament. Obey it. You will now see why I restrained your ardor and commanded you to remain faithful to the reigning king. As your friend and brother, I entreat you to obey me; as your master and the head of our house I command it.

Go to the king; demand my dignities, my property, my duties, and my titles. He may shuffle and hesitate

and make a few royal grimaces; but you must tell him that you love and are beloved by Marie Heredia, and that Marie can marry none but the Duc de Soria. You will see him quiver with joy when you tell him that. The great fortune of the Heredias would have hindered his accomplishing my ruin; but if you step into my shoes and despoil me he will consent joyfully.

Yes, you must marry Marie; I discovered the secret of your mutual love, so long subdued. I have already prepared the old count for this substitution. Marie and I were obeying the wishes and conventions of our parents. You are handsome as a child of love, I am ugly as a grandee of Spain; you are beloved, I was the object of a secret repugnance; you will soon overcome the resistance that a sense of my misfortunes will rouse against you in the heart of that noble Spanish woman.

As Marie's own jewels can replace those I ask for, send me my mother's diamonds, which will suffice to make me independent. Send them by my foster-mother, old Urraca, the only one of my household I wish to retain. She alone knows how to make my chocolate.

During our short revolution my life was reduced to the necessaries of living. You will therefore find the revenues of the last two years almost intact in the hands of the intendant. That sum belongs to me, but as the marriage of a Duc de Soria will occasion great expense, we will share it. You won't refuse a wedding-present

from your brother, the bandit. Besides, I choose to make it.

The barony of Macumer being in Sardinia, and not under the rule of the king of Spain, I keep it, and it may afford me a country and a name, if, by chance, the opportunity is given me.

God be thanked, at any rate, that the House of Soria is safe.

At this very moment, while I am telling you that I am nothing more than the Baron de Macumer, the French cannon are announcing the return of the Duc d'Angoulême. You will easily understand why I interrupt my letter.

October.

When I reached Paris I had scarcely a hundred francs in my pocket. A statesman seems very petty when, in the midst of great catastrophes which he has not prevented, he thinks of his selfish interests. The vanquished Moors had horses and a desert; Christians cheated of their hopes have monasteries. However, my resignation is not yet despondency. I am not so near a convent that I cease to dream of life. Olzaga gave me, at great risk to himself, letters of introduction, one of which was to a publisher who is to us Spaniards what Galignani is to the English. He has obtained eight scholars for me at three francs a lesson. I go every other day to each pupil, so that I give four lessons

a day and earn twelve francs — much more than I need for my daily wants. When Urraca arrives with the diamonds, I will rejoice the heart of some struggling Spaniard by handing my pupils over to him. I live in the rue Hillerin-Bertin, with a poor widow who takes boarders. My room faces south, and looks into a little garden. I hear no noise, I see verdure, and I spend only three francs a day. I am sometimes quite amazed at the calm, pure pleasure I take in this life of Dionysius in Corinth. From sunrise till ten o'clock I smoke and drink my chocolate, sitting at my window and watching the growth of two Spanish plants, a gorze or broom rising from a tangle of jessamine, gold on a white ground, an image that will ever cause a scion of the Moors to quiver with emotion.

At ten o'clock I start upon my round of lessons, which keeps me busy until four, when I return to dinner, and smoke and read till I go to bed. I could live this life for a long time. I like this mingling of work and meditation, solitude and intercourse with others.

Therefore, my dear Fernando, be satisfied and happy; my abdication is accomplished without one backward longing; like that of Charles V., it is followed by no regret, no desire like that of Bonaparte to revive the past. Five days and nights have passed since I wrote my last testament, but five centuries of thought have elapsed since then. Grandeur, titles, and wealth are

to me as though they had never been. Now that the barrier of respect between us has necessarily fallen, I can let you read my heart, dear brother. That heart, which gravity covers with an impenetrable coat of mail, is full of tenderness and unemployed devotion; but no woman ever divined this, — not even she who from her cradle was destined to be my wife. There lies the secret of my ardent political life. Having no woman to love, I loved Spain. Spain too has eluded me! Now that I am nothing, now that I can contemplate a destroyed *myself*, I ask my mind why life came to me and when it will leave me. Why has a race of chivalry *par excellence* given its earliest virtues, its Arab love, its warm poesy to its last scion? Will the seed remain within its horny envelope without budding, without shedding its eastern perfume from some radiant calix? What crime have I committed before my birth that I am unable to inspire love in the hearts of others? Was I, from the day I was born, a wreck cast up on a barren shore? I find in my soul the desert of my forefathers, lighted by a sun that scorches but enables nothing to grow there. Well, I will still be proud of my fallen race, my useless vigor, my wasted love, — old young man that I am! I will await here where I am, better perhaps than elsewhere, the last favor, death. Alas! beneath these foggy skies no spark can ever fall to light the flame of my smouldering embers.

My last words must needs be those of Jesus Christ, — "My God, my God! why hast thou abandoned me?" Terrible words, the depth of which no soul has fathomed.

Fernando, believe how happy I am in living in you and Marie; I shall henceforth look upon you both with the pride of a creator glorying in his work. Love each other well, and always; give me no griefs; dissensions between you would do more harm to me than to yourselves. Our mother foresaw that events would one day fulfil her hopes. Perhaps a mother's desire is a compact between herself and God. Besides, methinks she was one of those mysterious beings who are able to communicate with heaven and bring back visions of the future. Many a time have I read on the lines of her forehead that she wished for Fernando the honors and wealth of Felipe. I once said this to her; she answered me with tears, betraying the struggles of a heart that should have been equally for one as for the other, but which an unconquerable love gave wholly to you. Thus her spirit will hover joyfully above your heads when you kneel at the altar. Ah! Donna Clara, will you then embrace your Felipe — at last? See, he yields to your beloved even the dear young girl you regretfully pushed into his arms. What I do now will be pleasing to the dead, to the king; God wills it. Reject nothing, Fernando; obey me and keep silence.

P. S. Tell Urraca to call me only Monsieur Henarez. Say not a word about me to Marie. You must be the only living being to know the secrets of this Christianized Moor, in whose veins dies the blood of the last great family of the desert as he ends his days in solitude. Adieu.

VII.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE.

January, 1824.

WHAT! married so hastily? Is that how one ought to choose a husband? At the end of a month to promise yourself to a man, without loving him, without really knowing anything about him! He may be deaf and dumb, — there are a dozen ways of being that! he may be sickly, disagreeable, intolerable. Oh, Renée, don't you see what they are doing with you? you are wanted to continue the glorious house of l'Estorade, and that's the whole of it. You will become a mere provincial. Are these the promises we made to each other? If I were you, I'd rather float about the isles of Hyères in a boat, hoping that some corsair would capture me and sell me to the Grand Seignior; at any rate I should be a sultana, and some day the Validé; I should turn the seraglio upside down and

inside out as long as I was young, and after I was old, too. But you, you are coming out of one convent to go into another. I know you; you are a coward, and you are just letting yourself be driven into this thing with the meekness of a lamb. Come to Paris; I 'll give you advice; together we will turn men's heads and make ourselves queens. Your husband, if you really marry him, my poor darling, might make himself a deputy. I know what deputies are now, and I 'd explain the whole mechanism to you. You could play that instrument very well, and live in Paris and become a fashionable woman. Oh, I warn you, I shall not let you stay in that manor-house with the cramped name.

Monday.

It is now two whole weeks, my dearest, that I have lived the life of the world; one night Italian opera, next Grand Opera, and after them a ball. Ah! society is fairy-land. The music of the Italian opera enchants me, and while my soul is swimming in divinest pleasure opera glasses are levelled at me, I 'm admired! But, with a single glance, I can make the boldest young man lower his eyes. I have seen a number of charming ones, and yet, do you know, not one pleases me, none has given me anything like the emotion I feel when hearing Garcia in his glorious duet with Pellegrini in "Otello." Good heavens! what a jealous creature

Rossini must be to be able to express the passion of jealousy like that! What a cry it is: "Il mio cor si divide!" All this is Greek to you, for you have never heard Garcia; but you know what a jealous nature mine is. Shakespeare was a terribly sad dramatist. Othello lives for glory; he wins victories, commands, parades, reviews, leaving Desdemona in her corner; and Desdemona, who sees him preferring the stupidities of public life to her love, does n't get angry! Poor sheep, she deserved death. Let the man I deign to love dare to do aught else than love me! For my part I believe in the long probations of the days of chivalry. I consider it was very impertinent and very silly of that young puppy to demur when his sovereign lady sent him to fetch her glove from the lion's den; she was reserving for him, no doubt, some dazzling flower of love, which he lost after winning it, the fool!

But I 'm chattering on as if I had n't a great piece of news to tell you! My father will probably be sent to represent the king our master at Madrid; I say "our" master, for I am to accompany the embassy. My mother prefers to stay here; and my father takes me so as to have a woman about him.

My dear, this may seem to you all very simple, but there is something under it which it has taken me only fifteen days to find out. My mother would willingly follow my father to Madrid, if he could take with him,

as secretary to the embassy, a certain Monsieur de Canalis. But the king appoints the secretaries, and the duke dares neither to oppose the king, who is very obstinate, nor annoy my mother; so my diplomatic parent thinks he cuts the Gordian knot by leaving the duchess behind him. Monsieur de Canalis, the great poet of the day, is the young man who cultivates the society of my mother, and studies diplomacy with her daily from two to four o'clock. Diplomacy must be an interesting matter, for he is as faithful in his attendance as a gambler at the Bourse.

Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, our eldest, solemn, cold, and queer, also stays behind; he would be crushed by his father in Madrid. Miss Griffith says he is in love with an opera dancer. The idea of loving legs and pirouettes! I have remarked that he goes to all the plays in which Tullia (that's her name) dances; he applauds all her steps and leaves the box immediately after she has danced them. As to my second brother, he is with his regiment, and I have not yet seen him.

So that's how it is that I am destined to play Antigone to an ambassador of his Majesty. Perhaps I shall marry in Spain; and perhaps my father hopes to marry me there without a dowry, just as you are being sacrificed to the broken-down exile. My father himself proposed to take me with him, and offered me his Spanish teacher to prepare me. I replied: "You

want me to make a marriage in Spain, — that 's your castle." He made no reply, but he gave me a shrewd glance. He has lately taken to teasing me at breakfast; he studies me, and I baffle him. He, ambassador *in petto* though he be, is mystified about me. I am sure he has been taking me for a fool. He asked me what I thought of a certain young man, and also of two or three young ladies whom I have met lately. I answered by stupid remarks about the color of their hair, the difference of their heights, and their faces. My father seemed disappointed to find me so silly; he evidently blamed himself for having questioned me. "But of course, father," I added, "I don't say what I really think, because my mother lately showed me the impropriety of speaking my mind." "In your own family you can speak without restraint," observed my mother. "Well, then," I continued, "the young men seem to me more self-interested than interesting; more occupied with themselves than with us; and they can't, to tell the truth, disguise it. They change the expression of countenance they put on when speaking to us, instantly, and imagine, apparently, we have no eyes to see it. When they speak to us they behave like lovers; when they don't speak, like husbands. As for those young ladies, they are so insincere it is impossible to tell their character except by the way they dance; their shapes and movements are the only things about

them that don't deceive. I confess I have been frightened by the brutality of the great world. Things happen at supper-time, for instance, which give me an idea (of course in due proportion) of what public riots must be. Politeness very imperfectly conceals the universal selfishness. I certainly did expect the world to be very different. Women count for little; perhaps that's the result of Bonaparte's doctrines." "Armande has made astonishing progress," remarked my mother. "Did you expect me to be always asking for Madame de Staël?" I said. My father laughed and went out.

Saturday.

My dear, I have not said all. Here is something I keep for your private ear. Love, as we imagined it, must be most carefully hidden, for I can't see a trace of it anywhere. It is true I have intercepted a few glances given in a ball-room, but oh! so flat and meaningless! Our love — that world of marvels, of glorious dreams, of delightful realities, pleasures and pains alternating, smiles illuminating the character, words which enchant, happiness ever given, ever received, the pangs of absence, the joys bestowed by the presence of the loved one — of all that, nothing! nothing! Where and how did those splendid flowers of the soul come into being? Who deceived us; who has lied to us, — the world, or our own hearts? I have seen men,

young men, by the hundred, and not one of them is able to cause me the slightest emotion. They might show me admiration and devotion, and even fight for my sake, and I should still look at them with indifferent eyes. Love, my dearest, has one strange thing about it, a rare phenomenon: we may live all our life without ever meeting the being to whom Nature has assigned the power of making us happy. That reflection makes me shudder; for suppose that being should arrive too late! — what can you say to that?

For the last few days I have begun to be frightened about our destiny, and to discover why the women that I see have such sad faces under the layer of vermilion which the false joys of excitement put there. They all marry hap-hazard; that is how you are going to marry. A perfect storm of thoughts has been rushing through my mind. To be loved every day and all days in the same manner and yet differently, to be loved as much after ten years of happiness as the first day, — such a love would take years to produce; we must be long desired, we must awaken many curiosities and satisfy them all, excite many sympathies and respond to them. Can there be laws for the creations of the soul, as there are for the creations of nature? Will gladness maintain itself? In what proportion must the joys of love be mingled with tears? The cold tenor of that funereal, monotonous, perpetual convent life suddenly

seemed to me a possibility; whereas the riches, glories, tears, delights, the fêtes, joys, pleasures of an equal, mutual, and sanctioned love sprang up before me as an impossible attainment. I see no place in this great city for the sweets of love, — for its sacred walks beside the hedges, with the moonlight shining on the waters and our hearts resisting entreaty. Rich and young and beautiful, I have only to love, and love might become my life, my sole occupation; and yet, during the three months that I have passed hither and thither in society with impatient eagerness I have found nothing to win me in the brilliant, keen, and greedy looks about me. No voice has stirred my heart, no eye has illuminated the world before me. Music alone has satisfied my soul; that alone has been to me what our friendship is. Sometimes I sit for hours at my window at night, gazing at the garden, summoning events from the hidden sources whence they come. At other times when I drive out and leave my carriage to walk in the Champs-Élysées I fancy that the hero who is to rouse my torpid soul is following me and watching me. I look for him, and all I see are the jugglers, the sellers of gingerbread, persons hurrying about their business, lovers trying to evade observation; and to the latter I want to say: "You who are happy, tell me what love is." But then I check these foolish thoughts and get back into the carriage, resolved to live and die an old maid.

Love is certainly an incarnation; what then are the conditions necessary to bring it about? We are not always sure of being in harmony with ourselves; what would it be if we were two? God alone can solve that problem. I begin to think I would rather go back to the convent. If I stay in the world I shall do things that are very like follies, for it is impossible for me to accept what I see. Everything wounds my sensibilities, my secret thoughts, the ethics of my soul. Ah! my mother is a happy woman; she is adored by her great little Canalis. My dear, I am seized sometimes with a horrible curiosity to know what they say to each other during those two hours.

Griffith says she has gone through all these ideas of mine; she used to long to tear the eyes out of the women she saw happy, and to scratch and vilify them. According to her, virtue consists in burying such savage longings in the depth of one's heart. What is the depth of one's heart? A reservoir of all that is bad within us?

Well, I am much humiliated not to have encountered, so far, an adorer. I am a marriageable girl, but I have brothers and a proud family and touchy parents. Ah! if that is what deters the men they are very cowardly. The rôle of Chimène in "The Cid" and the Cid himself captivate me. What a glorious play it is! Well, well, a truce to all this. Adieu.

VIII.

SAME TO SAME.

January.

My father and I have a Spanish teacher, a poor refugee forced to escape because he took part in the revolution the Duc d'Angoulême went to Spain to suppress; we owe a number of fine fêtes to that triumph. Though a liberal, and doubtless a bourgeois, this man interests me. I imagine he was condemned to death, and I have tried to make him talk, so as to learn his secrets. But he 's as taciturn as a Castilian and as proud as Gonsalvo de Cordova; though, I must say, he is gentle too, and has angelic patience; his pride is not in arms like the Griffith's, it is inward; he obtains the respect that is due to him by keeping strictly to his duty, and he holds us at a distance by the ceremonious respect he testifies to us. My father insists that there 's a good deal of the *grand seigneur* about Monsieur Henarez, whom he calls Don Henarez among ourselves by way of a joke. One day I ventured to call him so to his face. He raised his eyes (which he usually keeps lowered) and gave me a lightning glance which confused me; my dear, he has the most beautiful eyes you ever saw! I asked him if I had offended him in any way; and he replied in his grandiose Spanish language: —

"Mademoiselle, I have come here to teach you Spanish."

I own I was ashamed and blushed. I was going to reply with some choice impertinence, when I happened to recollect what our dear mother in God used to tell us; so I answered, —

"If you have any cause to complain of me say so; I shall be much obliged to you."

He quivered; the blood rushed to his olive cheeks as he answered with gentle emotion: —

"Religion must have taught you better than I can how to respect misfortune. If I were indeed a grandee of Spain and had lost my all through the triumph of Ferdinand VII. your jest would be a cruelty; but if I am only a poor teacher of languages is it not an untimely sarcasm? Neither is worthy of a young girl of your station."

I took his hand and said: "I invoke your religion and ask you to forget the wrong I have done."

He bowed his head, opened my "Don Quixote," and sat down to our lesson.

This little incident upset me more than all the looks and compliments and fine phrases I have received since I have been in society. During the lesson I watched this man attentively; he seemed to be unaware that I did so; he never raised his eyes to look at me. I then discovered that this master of ours, whom we had sup-

posed to be forty years old, is really no more than twenty-six or eight. Miss Griffith made me take notice of the beauty of his black hair, and also of his teeth, which are like pearls. As for his eyes, they are velvet and fire both. With these exceptions he is small and ugly. Spaniards are said to be deficient in cleanliness, but he is scrupulously nice and neat; his hands are whiter than his face. His back is a little bent; his head is enormous, of a queer shape; his ugliness, which is rather spicy, is aggravated by pits of the small-pox which seam his face. His forehead is very prominent; his eyebrows meet and are too thick, which gives him a hard look repulsive to the soul. He has the sickly, pinched look of children doomed to die, but who are kept alive by incessant care, like Sœur Marthe. My father says he is a miniature likeness of Cardinal Ximenes.

My father does not like him, and is always very stiff in his presence. His manners have a natural dignity which seems to make the dear duke uneasy, for he can't endure superiority under any form beside him. As soon as we both know Spanish we are to start for Madrid.

Two days after the rebuff Henarez gave me, I said, on the occasion of his next lesson, by way of showing a sort of gratitude: "I make no doubt you have left Spain on account of political events; if my father is

sent there, as they say he will be, we shall be able to render you some service, and even obtain your pardon if you are condemned to a penalty."

"It is not in the power of any one to do me a service," he replied.

"Is it that you will accept none?" I asked; "or is it really a matter of impossibility?"

"Both," he replied with a bow, speaking in a tone which forced me to keep silence. The blood of my fathers boiled in my veins. Such pride incensed me, and I dropped the Sieur Henarez then and there.

And yet, my dear, there is something fine in not accepting anything from others. "He won't even take our friendship," I kept saying to myself as I conjugated a verb. Then I stopped short, and told him what I was thinking — in Spanish. Henarez answered very politely that all such sentiments demanded equality, which could not exist in our case, and therefore it was useless to discuss it. "Do you mean by equality reciprocity of sentiment, or similarity of rank?" I asked, determined to drag him out of a coldness which irritated me. He raised his formidable eyes, and I was forced to lower mine. My dear, the man is an inexplicable enigma. He seemed to ask me if my words were a declaration; there was joy, pride, an anguish of uncertainty in his look which wrung my heart. I saw plainly that these little coquetries, which mean nothing with

Frenchmen, are liable to have a dangerous significance to Spaniards; I retreated into my shell, feeling rather foolish. As he finished the lesson and took his leave he gave me a look full of humble entreaty. "Do not trifle with misfortune," it seemed to say. This sudden contrast with his hitherto grave and cold demeanor made a deep impression on me. It is horrible to think and to say, but I believe there are treasures of affection in that man.

IX.

MADAME LA VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU.

December.

All is said and done, dear love; it is Madame de l'Estorade who writes to you; but nothing is changed between us; there is only a girl the less. Don't be troubled; I thought soberly about my consent, and I did not give it heedlessly.

My life is now mapped out. The certainty of following a plain high-road suits both my mind and my character. A great moral force has settled forever what we used to call the chances of life. My husband and I have an estate to improve, a dwelling to beautify; I have a household to manage and render cheerful, and

an unfortunate man to reconcile with life. No doubt I shall also have a family to care for, children to bring up. Why be sorry, dearest? Ordinary life cannot be a grand or excessive thing. I admit that those immense desires which expand both soul and mind do not enter into a contract such as this, — at least, not apparently. Nevertheless, I do not think that the humble things to which I shall henceforth devote my life are devoid of passion. The task of making a poor man, long the plaything of misfortune, believe in happiness is a fine work, and will suffice to relieve the monotony of my existence. I see no ground for suffering, but I do see the chance of doing much good.

Between you and me, I do not love Louis de l'Estorade with the sort of love which makes the heart beat fast when we hear a step, which stirs us to our centre at the tone of a voice, or the glance of an eye; but neither is he displeasing to me. What will I do — I hear you ask — with that instinct for things sublime, with those strong and stirring thoughts which bind you and me together and are a part of ourselves? Yes, I admit I have considered that. Dearest, it will be a great thing still to keep those powers hidden in our hearts, to employ them silently for the good of the family, to make them the means of happiness to beings entrusted to us and to whom we owe our highest selves. Even so, the period at which such faculties are at their best

is limited in women; when passed, I shall look back and see that my life, though not grand, will have been calm, even, and without painful vicissitudes.

We are born to privileges; we can choose between love and motherhood. Well, I have chosen; I shall make my gods my children, and find my elysium in this corner of the earth.

That is all that I can tell you to-day. I thank you for the pretty things you have sent me. Give your capable eye to a further list of commissions, which I enclose. I wish to live in an atmosphere of luxury and elegance, and to get as little as I can in the provinces. You complain that I shall grow provincial. No, by living in solitude a woman remains herself, and does not take the color of her surroundings. I count on you to keep me informed as to the fashions. In his enthusiasm over the marriage, my father-in-law denies me nothing; he is pulling the house to pieces; it is full of workmen from Paris who are modernizing everything.

X.

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

January.

Oh, Renée! you have saddened me for days. Can it be that all that beauty, that proud and noble face,

those naturally elegant manners, that soul full of precious gifts, those eyes in which our souls may slake their thirst in springs of love, that heart brimming over with exquisite delicacy, that broad, clear mind, all, all those rare faculties, those triumphs of nature and of our mutual education, — treasures from which should issue, for passion and for love, choice riches, poems, hours as full as years, pleasures to enslave a man, — all, all, all are to be lost in a vulgar, common marriage, lost in the vacancy of a life which will soon become irksome to you? I hate the children you are going to have; they 'll be ill-formed. Everything is mapped out and foreseen in such a life; you 'll have nothing to hope, or fear, or suffer. And suppose you meet, some glorious day, a being who awakens you from the sleep into which you are going? Ah, I have a cold chill down my back at the very thought.

Well, well, at any rate you have a friend; and no doubt you 'll be the spirit of that valley; you will bathe in its beauties, you will live with Nature, you will penetrate into the grandeur of her things, into the slowness of vegetation and the rapidity of thought, and then — as you gaze at your smiling flowers you will be forced to question yourself. I know beforehand what you will write to me when you are going along your straight road, with a husband before and your children behind you, one in silence with a satisfied air, the others

screeching and tumbling about. Your misty valley with its hillsides bare or shaded with trees, your singular Provence meadows threaded with brooklets of transparent water, the many tones the light takes on, — all this infinitude about you, varied by God himself, will force you to think of the contrasting monotony of your life. Then, my Renée, remember, I am here; you will ever have a friend whose heart is untouched by social pettiness, a heart that is all your own.

Monday.

Dearest, my Spaniard is delightfully melancholy; there is something about him, I don't know what it is, so calm, austere, dignified, profound, that I must own he interests me exceedingly. The solemnity and silence in which he wraps himself is enticing to the soul. He is mute and superb like a dethroned king. Griffith and I study him like a riddle. How very queer! a teacher of languages actually gets more hold upon my thoughts than any other man has been able to obtain; and yet I have passed in review all the sons of great families, attachés to embassies and ambassadors themselves, generals and sub-lieutenants, peers of France, their sons and nephews, the court and society!

The man's coldness is irritating. The haughtiest pride fills the space he chooses to keep between himself and us; he wraps himself, as it were, in obscurity.

He is the one who coquets; I 'm the daring one. This curious reversal amuses me all the more because it can have no consequences. What is a man, a Spaniard, a teacher? I don't feel the slightest respect for any man whatever, be it the king himself. I think women are worth much more than men, even the most distinguished men. Oh! how I would have ruled Napoleon! I 'd have made him feel, if he loved me, that he moved by my will.

Yesterday I said a satirical thing which must have cut teacher Henarez to the quick. He said nothing; the lesson was just over; he took his hat, bowed, and gave me a look which makes me think he will never come back any more. I like that; there would be something dangerous in playing a second edition of "La Nouvelle Héloïse," by Jean Jacques Rousseau. I have just read that book, and it has made me take a positive hatred to love. A discussing and speechifying love, I think intolerable. Clarissa, too, she is a great deal too self-satisfied when she has written that long little letter of hers; but Richardson's work is a capital explanation, so my father says, of Englishwomen. Rousseau's seems to me a philosophical sermon in epistles.

Love, to my mind, is a poem entirely personal. All that writers tell us about it is both true and false. The fact is, my dear darling, now that you will know noth-

ing but humdrum love, I shall be obliged, in the interests of our mutual existence, to remain unmarried and have some grand passion, or how will you and I ever know life?

Write me exactly all that happens to you, especially during the first days you spend with that animal called a husband. I 'll promise the same if any man loves me. Adieu, poor, dear, gobbled-up darling.

XI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU.

La Crampade.

You and your Spaniard, dearest, make me shudder. I write these few lines to beg you to dismiss him. All you tell me reveals one of those dangerous characters who, having nothing to lose, risk all. The man ought not to be your lover, and he can't be your husband. I will write you in detail about my marriage when I feel less anxiety than your last letter has caused me.

XII.

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

February.

DEAREST, this morning, at nine o'clock, my father sent to say he would pay me a visit. I was up and dressed, and I found him solemnly seated by the fire in my salon, far more grave and thoughtful than is his wont. He pointed to the sofa opposite to him; I understood his gesture and seated myself with a gravity which mimicked his so closely that he began to smile, though the smile itself was gravely sad.

"You are as clever as your grandmother," he began.

"Now, father, don't play the courtier here," I answered, laughing. "You have something you want to ask of me."

He rose from his seat in much agitation and talked to me for half an hour. This conversation, my dear, is worthy of preservation. As soon as he left me I sat down at my writing-table and tried to make a record of every word. It is the first time I have known my father to speak out all his thought.

He began by flattering me, and did it very well; I could not help feeling grateful for being understood and appreciated.

"Armande," he said, "I was strangely mistaken about you, and now I am agreeably surprised. When

you returned from the convent I took you for a girl like other girls, without any particular capacity, quite ignorant, reflecting little, and easy to please with trinkets and gowns."

"Thank you, father, in the name of Girlhood," I said.

"Oh!" he said, with the gesture of a statesman, "there is no such thing as real girlhood in these days. But as for you, you have an enlightened mind; you judge all things for what they are worth; your clear-sightedness is quite remarkable. You are very satirical; you seem to see nothing, but you do see even the causes of the effects other people are examining. You are a minister in petticoats; there is no one here but you who can understand what I am going to say to you. I can therefore only employ you against yourself in the matter of a sacrifice I am about to ask of you. I shall explain to you frankly the plans I have long formed, and in which I still persist. In order to make you yield to them, I must prove to you that they are the outcome of noble sentiments. I feel myself obliged to lay before you political considerations of the highest interest for the kingdom, which would simply seem tiresome to any other young girl. After hearing what I have to say you shall have time for reflection; I will give you six months if you desire it. You are absolute mistress of yourself; if you refuse the sacrifice I am

about to ask of you I shall submit to your decision and say no more."

This exordium, my dearest, made me really serious, and I said to him, "Go on, father."

Now, here are the exact words of which the statesman delivered himself: —

"My child, France is in a precarious situation, known only to the king and a few of the leading minds. But the king is a head without arms; the leading minds who know the secret danger have no authority over the men who could avert it and bring about better things. These men, the result of popular elections, cannot be made instruments. Remarkable as many of them are, they are only continuing the work of social destruction; they will not help us in strengthening the edifice. In a word, there are now but two parties in the State, — that of Sylla, and that of Marius; I am for Sylla against Marius. That 's the outline of the matter. Coming to particulars, the Revolution continues; it is implanted in the law, it is written on the soil, it is fixed in all minds; it is the more formidable because the greater number of the king's supporters, who see that it has neither soldiers nor money, think it vanquished. The king has a great mind; he sees clearly; but he is over-persuaded day after day by the followers of his brother, who go too fast; he has not two years to live, and he wants to die in peace. Do you know,

my dear girl, what has really been the most destructive effect of the Revolution? You probably never thought of it. In cutting off the king's head the Revolution cut off the heads of all fathers of families. The Family no longer exists; we have nothing but individuals. In seeking to become a nation, France has ceased to be an empire. By proclaiming equality in the inheritance of patrimony the spirit of Family has been destroyed; public finances have been created; and so the way has been opened to feebleness among the leaders, brute force among the masses, the extinction of the arts, the reign of individual interests. We are now between two systems: either the State must be constituted through the Family, or it must be constituted on personal interests; democracy or aristocracy, discussion or obedience, catholicism or religious indifference, — there 's the question in a nut-shell. I belong to the small number of those who wish to resist what is called the people, — in the people's interest, be it understood. It is no longer a question of feudal rights, as fools declare, nor of the rights of the nobility; it is a question of the safety of the State, of the very life of France. The existence of any nation not based on the paternal power has no security. That power is the first rung in the ladder of responsibility and subordination which leads up to the king. The king is the country, the country, ourselves; to die for the king is to die for

ourselves, for our Family, which can no more die than the kingdom dies. Every animal has its instinct; the instinct of man is the spirit of family. A country is strong when it is composed of rich families, all of whose members are interested in the defence of the common wealth, — be it money, glory, privileges, or enjoyments; it is weak when it is composed of individuals held to no solidarity, to whom it signifies little whether they obey seven men or one, a Russian or a Corsican, provided they are each individually allowed to keep their bit of land; and these selfish fools don't see that it is certain to be eventually taken from them! We are hurrying to a dreadful state of things, in case of failure. We shall soon have none but penal or fiscal laws, — your money, or your life! The most generous nation on this earth will soon cease to be led by noble sentiments. We shall ourselves have made and developed incurable wounds in our own body, — for instance, universal jealousy; the upper classes will soon be indistinguishable; equality of wants and desires will be mistaken for equality of powers; recognized capacity, true superiority will be swept under by an invading flood of bourgeoisie. It was possible to select one man among a thousand, but how can you find him among three million similar ambitions, all clothed with the same livery, — that of mediocrity? This triumphant mass of the bourgeoisie does not per-

ceive that it will have against it another terrible mass, — that of the peasant-proprietors; twenty millions of living acres, walking, talking, comprehending nothing but wanting all the more, barricading every avenue and controlling the brute force of the nation."

"But," I said, interrupting my father, "what can I do for the State? I feel no inclination to be the Joan of Arc of families, and die by slow fire at the stake of a convent."

"You are a little pest," he replied. "When I talk sense you reply with a jest; when I jest you talk to me as if you were an ambassador yourself."

"Love lives on contradictions," I said.

He laughed. "Think over what I have now said to you," he continued. "You will observe how much confidence and even grandeur there is in my speaking to you thus frankly; and perhaps events may still further help my projects. I know very well that toward you those projects are unjust and injurious; consequently, I ask your consent to them less from your heart and your imagination than from your reason. I see in you more reason and good sense than I have met with in others, I don't care who they are."

"You flatter yourself," I said, laughing; "for remember, I am your child."

"Well," he continued, "I cannot be inconsistent; whoso desires an end must take the means to it. We

owe an example to others. You ought not to have a fortune until that of your younger brother is assured. I wish to employ all your capital in providing an entailed estate and title for him."

"But," I said, "if I resign my fortune to you, I hope you will not prevent me from living as I please and making myself happy in my own way?"

"Provided," he answered, "that the life you choose to lead does not in any way detract from the honor, the consideration, and I may say, the glory of your family."

"Well, well!" I cried, "you are depriving me rather quickly of the reason and good sense you gave me just now."

"There is no such thing to be found in France," he said, rather bitterly, "as a man of station willing to marry a girl of high rank without fortune, and to settle a dowry upon her. If such a man could be found he would belong to the class of upstart bourgeoisie, and my views on that subject are, I confess, of the eleventh century."

"So are mine," I said; "but why be so discouraging? There must be some old peers of France to be had."

"Louise," he cried, "you know too much!"

Then he kissed my hand and left me, smiling.

Monday.

I received your short letter that same morning, and it has made me think seriously of the abyss into which

you evidently think I am about to fall. A voice seems to cry within me, "You will fall!" so I have determined to take precautions. Henarez has ventured to look at me, my dear, and his eyes trouble me; they produce a sensation which I can only compare to that of terror. I can't look at that man any more than I can at a toad; he is ugly — and fascinating.

For the last two days I have been deliberating whether I shall tell my father plainly that I do not wish to learn Spanish, and so get rid of Henarez; but then, after stern resolutions on the subject, I feel a desire to be stirred by the horrible sensations I have on seeing him, and I say to myself, "Once more, and then I'll send him away." My dear, his voice has such a penetrating sweetness! he speaks as Fodor sings. His manners are simple, without the slightest affectation. And oh, such beautiful teeth! Just now, as he left me, he seemed to notice how much he interested me, and he made a motion — a very respectful one — to take my hand to kiss it; but he repressed the impulse instantly, as if frightened by his own boldness or the distance he was about to cross. Little as it was, I saw the whole thing and I smiled; for nothing is more touching than to see the impulse of a socially inferior nature driven back upon itself. There is so much audacity in the love of a bourgeois for a girl of rank! My smile emboldened him; the poor man looked for his hat and either could

not or would not find it, so I very gravely gave it to him. Tears moistened his eyes. There was a whole world of things and thoughts in that short moment. We understood each other so well that the idea came to me to give him my hand to kiss. Perhaps it was as good as telling him that love might cross the space between us. Well, I don't know what made me do it; Griffith's back was turned, and I did hold out to him, proudly enough, my little white paw, and then — I felt the fire of his lips, softened by tears that fell from his eyes. Ah! my angel, I sat quite still and strengthless in my chair, thoughtful — I was happy; but it is impossible to explain how or why. What I felt was poesy, a poem. My abasement, of which I am now ashamed, seemed to me grandeur. He had fascinated me; that's my excuse.

Friday.

He is really very handsome. His language is elegant; his mind is one of remarkable superiority. My dearest, he is as learned and logical as Bossuet when explaining to me the mechanism of not only the Spanish language, but the action of human thought on all languages. French seems to be his mother-tongue. When I showed my surprise at this, he told me that he came to France with the king of Spain when very young, and stayed at Valençay.

What a change has taken place in his soul! He is no longer the same man. He now comes simply dressed, but exactly as a *grand seigneur* should be when he goes out on foot in the morning. His wit shines like a beacon-light throughout the lesson; he displays great eloquence. Like a weary man who has suddenly recovered strength, he has betrayed a soul hitherto hidden. He told me the story of a poor footman who let himself be killed merely to obtain one look from a queen of Spain. "What else could he do but die?" I said. That answer seemed to fill his heart with joy, and his eyes positively frightened me.

That evening I went to a ball at the Duchesse de Lenoncourt's. The Prince de Talleyrand was there. I asked Monsieur de Vandenesse (a charming young man) to inquire of the prince whether he had received an Henarez among his guests at Valençay, in 1809. Henarez, it appears, is the Moorish name of the Soria family, who were, they say, originally Abencerrages converted to Christianity. The old duke and his two sons accompanied Ferdinand VII. into exile. The eldest son, the present Duc de Soria, has just been deprived of all property, titles, and honors by the king on account of some private animosity. The ostensible cause was that the duke committed the immense mistake of accepting a constitutional ministry under Valdez. Luckily, he escaped from Cadiz before the

entry of Monseigneur le Duc d'Angoulême, who, in spite of his good-will, could not have saved him from the anger of the king.

All this, which the Vicomte de Vandenesse repeated to me *verbatim* from the lips of the Prince de Talleyrand, gave me much to think about. I can't tell you with what anxiety I awaited my next lesson, which took place this morning. During the first quarter of an hour I examined Henarez, asking myself whether he were duke or bourgeois, without coming to any conclusion. He seemed to guess my thoughts as they rose, and to take pleasure in baffling them.

At last I could stand it no longer; I shut up the book hastily, stopped the translation that I was making aloud, and said to him in Spanish: "You are deceiving us, monsieur; you are not a poor bourgeois refugee; you are the Duc de Soria."

"Mademoiselle," he answered in a sad tone, "Unhappily for me, I am not the Duc de Soria."

I understood the despair he put into those words, "unhappily for me." Ah! my dearest, I defy any other man to put so much passion and so many things into three short words. He lowered his eyes and dared not look at me.

"Monsieur de Talleyrand," I said, "in whose house you spent those years of exile, declares that there is no alternative for an Henarez, — he must either be the Duc de Soria lately exiled again, or a servant of the family."

He raised his head and showed me two black and glowing eyes, flaming with pride and yet humiliated; the man seemed to me in torture.

"My father was in truth a servant of the king of Spain," he said.

Griffith did n't understand this way of studying; long pauses occurred between each question and answer. At last I said point-blank: —

"Are you noble or bourgeois?"

"You are doubtless aware, mademoiselle, that everybody in Spain, even the beggars, are noble."

Such caution made me impatient. Since my last lesson I had written a composition in which my imagination had amused itself. It was in the form of a letter from a friend, and in it I gave an ideal portrait of the man by whom I wished to be loved. I intended to give it to him to translate into Spanish. Hitherto I had always translated from Spanish into French, and never from French into Spanish. I now called his attention to this and asked him to show me how to do it. Then I asked Griffith to go to my room and fetch the letter I had received that morning from a friend. "I shall see," thought I, "what effect my programme of love has upon him, and what kind of blood flows in his veins." I took the paper from Griffith, saying, "See how clearly I have copied it" (for it was all in my handwriting). Then I held out to him the paper, or,

if you choose to call it so, the trap, and I watched him while he read it. Here it is: —

"The man who will please me, dearest, must be proud and haughty with men, but gentle with women. His piercing eye must instantly repress everything that approaches to ridicule. He will have a smile of pity for those who jest on sacred things, which are, in truth, the poesy of the heart, and without which life would be a sad reality. I have a profound contempt for those who endeavor to take from us the living spring of religious ideas which are so fruitful in consolation. Therefore his beliefs must be simple as those of a child, resting on the unshakable convictions of a man of intellect who has examined his reasons for belief. His mind, fresh and original, will be without affectation or pretence; he can say nothing intrusive or out of place; it will be as impossible for him to bore others as to bore himself, because he will always have in his own soul rich depths.

"All his thoughts will be of a noble nature, elevated, chivalrous, without egotism. In all his actions the total absence of self-interest and calculation will be noticeable. His defects will come from the very extent of his ideas, which will be beyond his time. In all things I must find him in advance of his epoch. Full of delicate attentions to the feeble, he will be good to all

women, but very difficult to render in love with any one woman; he will regard that question as too serious to treat lightly. It may be that he will pass his whole life without loving, while possessing in himself all the qualities best calculated to inspire a deep passion. But if he once finds his ideal of womanhood, whom he has seen in his waking dreams, if he meets the being who understands him, who fills his soul and casts upon his life the rays of happiness, who shines to him like a star through the dark, cold, icy clouds of this world, who gives a fresh, new charm to his existence and makes the silent chords within him vibrate, — then it is surely useless to say he will know how to recognize and appreciate his happiness. He will render that woman happy. Never, by word or look will he wound the loving heart which gives itself into his hands with the blind confidence of a child asleep in its mother's arms; for if that heart were awakened from so sweet a dream it would be rent in twain, — it could never embark on that ocean without putting all its future on the venture.

"This man will necessarily have the demeanor, countenance, carriage, and manner of doing even the smallest things which characterize superior beings who are simple and without assumption. He may be ugly, but his hands will be beautiful; his upper lip will be slightly curled with an ironical and disdainful smile for the common and the indifferent; he will reserve for

those he loves the bright celestial rays of a glance full of soul."

"Will mademoiselle," he said in Spanish and in a voice of emotion, "permit me to keep this paper in memory of her? This is the last lesson I shall have the honor of giving her; and that which I receive from this letter may become my eternal rule of conduct. I left Spain a fugitive, without money; but I have now received from my family a sum sufficient for my needs. I shall have the honor to send some poor Spaniard to take my place as teacher."

These words seemed to me to mean, "The play has lasted long enough."

He rose with extreme dignity, and left me somewhat confounded by this delicacy in a man of his class. Then he went downstairs and asked to see my father. At dinner my father said, smiling: —

"Louise, you have been taking lessons of a Spanish grandee, an ex-minister of the king of Spain and a man condemned to death."

"Yes, the Duc de Soria," I replied.

"Duke, no," said my father, "he is no longer that; he now takes the title of Baron de Macumer, from a domain he still retains in Sardinia. He strikes me as very original."

"Don't insult with that word, which means sarcasm

and contempt when you say it, a man who is your equal, and who has," I added, "a noble soul."

"Madame la Baronne de Macumer," said my father, giving me one of his sarcastic looks.

I dropped my eyes.

"Dear me!" said my mother, "Henarez must have met the Spanish ambassador on the portico."

"Yes," replied my father. "The ambassador asked me if I was conspiring against the king, his master. But for all that he bowed to the ex-grandee with much deference, and declared that he put himself at his orders."

All this, my dear Renée, happened two weeks ago, and for fifteen days I have not seen the man who loves me — for he does love me. What is he doing? I would I were a fly, a mouse, a sparrow. I would I could see him, alone, in his own room, without his perceiving me. There's a man to whom I could say: "Go, die for me!" and he would go; at least, I think so. And so — so, Renée, there is a man in Paris of whom I think; whose glance can inundate my soul with light. Oh! he's an enemy, I must tread him under my feet. What! can there be a man without whom I cannot live, — a man who is necessary to me? You marry, and I — love! At the end of four short months how these white doves who flew so high have fallen into the slough of reality!

Sunday.

Last night at the Italian opera I felt I was looked at; my eyes were magnetically attracted by two eyes of fire, shining like two carbuncles, in a dark corner of the orchestra. Henarez never took his eyes from me. The monster chose the one spot from which he could see me, and there he stayed. I don't care what he is in politics, but he has the genius of love. Renée, "behold the point we now have reached," as the great Corneille saith.

XIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU.

La Crampade, February.

My dear Louise, — Before writing to you I did well to wait. But now that I know, or rather have learned, many things, I ought to tell them to you for your future happiness. There is so much difference between a young girl and a married woman that the young girl can no more conceive of the latter than the married woman can return to girlhood.

I preferred to become the wife of Louis de l'Estorade rather than return to the convent. That 's the plain truth. After making quite sure that if I did not marry Louis I should return to the convent, I resigned myself,

as girls say. Having resigned myself, I set to work to examine my situation, so as to make the best of it.

At first the serious nature of the engagements I was taking filled me with terror. Marriage is a thing for life, whereas falling in love is only a matter of pleasure; marriage has to last after those pleasures have disappeared, and it gives birth to interests far more dear than those which first unite a man and woman. Perhaps nothing more is really needed for a happy marriage than a sincere friendship, which covers many human imperfections with its harmonies. Nothing stood in the way of my having such a friendship with Louis de l'Estorade. Having determined not to expect in marriage the joys of that love about which we used to think so often and with such dangerous enthusiasm, I began to feel a sort of gentle tranquillity within me. "If I cannot have love," I said to myself, "why not seek for happiness. Besides, I am loved, and I will let myself be loved. My marriage will not be servitude; on the contrary, I shall always be in a position to command. What objection can there be to that state of things, for a woman who desires to remain the absolute mistress of herself?"

The difficult question of being married without marriage was settled in a conversation between Louis and me, in which he disclosed the excellence of his character and the sweetness of his soul. My dearest, I

wanted to remain in that beautiful period of the hope and growth of love which leaves to the soul its virginity. To grant nothing to mere duty, to the law, to follow one's own impulse only, to keep my freedom of will — ah! that was surely a good and noble thing! This agreement, which is against that of the laws, and of the sacrament itself, could only pass between Louis and myself.

This difficulty — the first that I perceived — was all that caused the slight delay in my marriage. If at the outset I was resolved to accept everything rather than return to the convent, it is natural that I should want to obtain all I could after making up my mind to the worst; and then you know, dear, you and I want all things! I examined Louis as best I could, saying to myself: "Have misfortunes made him good or bad, kind or harsh?" By dint of watching him I discovered that his love amounted to worship. When I once felt myself uplifted to the position of an idol, when I saw him turn pale and tremble at a look, I felt that I might dare all. I drew him apart in one of our country walks and cautiously questioned him. I made him talk to me; I asked for his ideas, his plans, what he expected our future to be. My questions seemed to him such proofs of reflection, and touched so precisely on the weak spots of that dreadful dual life, that Louis, as he has since told me, was alarmed at such reasoning in a girl.

As for me, I listened to his answers; they were confused and involved, like those of a person who has lost his self-possession; and I presently discovered that fate had given me an adversary who was less able than I just because he divined, what you used to call so magniloquently, my great soul. Poor fellow! broken by sufferings and privation he looks upon himself as a wreck, and, as he told me, three fears overcame him. In the first place, he is thirty-seven and I am seventeen, and he looked with horror on the twenty years difference between us. Then, it is agreed and understood that I am very beautiful, and Louis could not help seeing and knowing regretfully that sufferings have robbed him of his youth. Besides all that, he felt me to be superior as a woman to himself as a man. Forced into distrust of himself by these three visible inferiorities, he feared he was not fit to make me happy and was only accepted by me as a *pis aller*. He said to me one evening, hesitatingly, that I would not have taken him unless to escape the convent.

"That is true," I answered gravely. My dear friend, he then caused me the first great emotion of all those that come to us through men. I was struck to the heart when I saw two heavy tears rolling from his eyes.

"Louis," I said in a comforting voice, "it depends on you to make this marriage of convenience a marriage

to which I can give my fullest consent. What I am going to ask of you requires a far greater abnegation on your part than the utmost devotion of your love, sincere as that may be. Can you, will you rise to friendship such as I understand it? We can have but one real friend in life, and I would fain be yours. Friendship is the bond between two equal souls, uniting their strength, but nevertheless, independent. Let us be friends and partners, bearing our life together. Leave me my independence. I do not forbid you to inspire in me the love you say you feel for me; but I do not wish to be your wife until I feel I can be. When that time comes I will obey the feeling instantly. I do not ask you to make this friendship cold, or to refrain from troubling it with words of love; I will try, myself, to make our affection perfect. I do not wish to seem to you capricious or prudish, for that I am not; and I think you too much of an honorable gentleman not to save me from all outward remark, and to keep up, at any rate, the appearances of marriage."

My dear, I have never seen any one so happy as Louis when I made him my proposition; his eyes shone; happiness seemed to have quenched his tears.

"Be sure of one thing," I added; "there is nothing fantastic in what I ask of you. It comes from my immense desire to gain your esteem. If you owed me only to marriage, to legal and religious formalities,

would you always be as glad as if your love were crowned by me? And think, if I became your wife and a mother through passive obedience, as my dear, honored mother tells me I should — if I had a child, do you think I could love it as if it were the son of my will and heart? It may not be necessary for us to please each other as much as lovers seek to do, but remember that we must not displease each other. We are about to enter upon a trying and dangerous situation. We are to live in the country; we ought to guard against all instability of feelings. Let us make our lives of an even tenor; wise hearts can surely forearm themselves against disillusions, and the misery of changed feelings."

He was greatly surprised to find that I had reasoned out this matter in my own mind, but he made me a solemn promise; after which I took his hand and pressed it affectionately.

We were married the following week. Sure of keeping my liberty I threw myself gayly into all the insipid preparations for the various ceremonies. I was able to be my own natural self, and I've no doubt everybody thought I was a *deep one*, — to use one of our Blois expressions. They took me, I know, for a shrewd girl; though in reality I was only delighted with a new situation and the many resources I had managed to provide myself with. Dearest, I had seen, as in a vision, the difficulties of my life, and I longed sincerely

to make the happiness of that man. Now, it is certain that living in solitude as we shall do, if a woman does not maintain her supremacy marriage must become intolerable in the long run. Conjugal love, as I conceive it, should clothe a woman with hope, should render her supreme, should give her an inexhaustible vital force, a warmth of life which is able to bring all things to fruition around her. The more she is mistress of herself, the more able she is to bring love and happiness into the world.

I have exacted a promise from Louis that the deepest secrecy shall surround our internal arrangements. A man who is thought to be controlled by a woman (as the world regards it) is justly open to ridicule. The influence of a woman should be absolutely secret; it is a mystery; in all things our gift lies there. Having undertaken to raise this broken nature, to restore the qualities I see in it to their pristine lustre, I desire that the results I obtain should seem to come spontaneously from Louis himself. Such is the task I set before me; it is a fine one, and it suffices for a woman's glory. I am almost proud of this secret thought which fills my life, this plan on which my efforts will all be spent, while known to none but God and you.

I may say now that I am almost happy; and perhaps I should not be as happy if I could not tell all I feel to

a beloved friend — for I cannot tell it to him; my happiness would wound him, and therefore I must hide it. He has, my dearest, the delicacy of a woman, like all men who have suffered much. For two months we remained to each other what we were before our marriage. I studied, as you can well imagine, a crowd of little personal questions, on which love depends far more than we think. In spite of my coldness, that suffering soul expanded; I saw his face change its expression and grow young again. The elegance I brought into the house cast its reflections on his whole person and transformed it. Insensibly I grew accustomed to him; I made him another myself. I discovered as I watched him the correspondence of his soul to his countenance. The animal we call a husband — that 's your expression — disappeared. At last I found — on some sweet evening, but I do not well know which, a lover whose words went to my soul and on whose arm I rested with unspeakable pleasure; nothing seemed lacking to our love, neither the delicacy nor the mysterious grace which our imaginations, dear, had always asked for it.

I will admit to you, that in spite of all this, again I stipulated for my liberty of will. I cannot tell you all my reasons, and yours is certainly the only soul into which I could pour this semi-confidence. Even when belonging wholly to one's husband, beloved or not, I

think we lose much by not concealing our sentiments and the judgment that we form of marriage. For myself, the only joy that I have had, but that is celestial, comes from the certainty of bringing back to life this suffering soul intrusted to me. Louis has renewed his youth and strength; his gayety has returned to him; he is no longer the same man. I have wiped out, like a fairy, even the memory of his sufferings. I have metamorphosed him; he has grown charming. Sure of pleasing me, his mind unfolds and displays all sorts of new qualities.

To be the living principle of a man's welfare when that man knows it and mingles gratitude with love — ah! dearest, that certainty develops a power in the soul which surpasses that of love, so-called. That impetuous and lasting power, one, yet diverse, generates the Family, that glorious work of womanhood, which I now am able to perceive in all its fruitful beauty.

The old father is no longer miserly; he gives me blindly all I wish. The servants are gay and cheerful. Louis's happiness shines upon this home in which I reign by love. The old count enters heartily into all the improvements. Not to seem a blot on my luxury, he has lately adopted, just to please me, the dress, and with the dress the manners of the present day. We have English horses, a coupé, a calèche and a tilbury.

Our servants are in plain clothes, but very stylish. I give all my mind — I 'm not joking — to the business of managing my household with due economy, and providing it with as much enjoyment as I can at the least possible cost.

I have already put into Louis's head the necessity of making roads, so as to deserve the reputation of a man concerned in the welfare of his neighborhood. I have also spurred him on to increase his mental attainments. I hope to see him before long a member of the council-general of the department, through the influence of my family and that of his own mother. I have told him plainly that I am ambitious, that I think it a very good plan for his father to continue the management of our property, and make our savings for us, because I want him wholly devoted to politics; I wish that to be his career, and then, if we have children, I shall see them happy and useful in serving the State. I told him that he must, on pain of losing my esteem and affection, be elected deputy from the department at the coming elections. My family will help his canvass, and if he succeeds we shall pass our winters in Paris. Ah! my darling, I wish you could have seen with what ardor he obeyed me! I saw then how much he loved me. Yesterday he wrote me the following letter from Marseille, whither he had gone for only a few hours: —

"When you permitted me to love you, my tender Renée, I began to believe in happiness; but now I see no end to it. The past is no longer anything but a vague memory, a shadow needed to bring forth the splendor of that happiness. When I am near you, love transports me to the point of depriving me of the power of expressing it; I can then only admire and adore you. Words come to me when we are parted. You are beautiful indeed, with a beauty so grave, so majestic, that time will scarcely alter it; and though the love of a married pair does not depend as much on beauty as on feelings — which are exquisite in you — let me tell you here that the certainty of seeing you always beautiful gives me a delight which increases with every glance I cast upon you. The harmony and the dignity of the lines of your face, which reveals your noble soul, show something unspeakably pure beneath the ivory tones of the skin. The light in your black eyes and the frank outline of your brow tell of lofty virtues, of steadfast loyalty, of a heart made to meet the storms of life should any come. Nobility is the distinctive quality of your nature; I do not pretend to inform you of this; I simply write it to show you that I know the full value of the treasure I possess.

"The little that you grant me is and will be happiness, in years to come, as at present; for I feel all that there is of grandeur in the promise we have made to respect each other's liberty. We shall be free in spite of the tie, the close chain that binds us; we shall owe each proof of tenderness to the loving will of the one who grants it. I shall be all the more proud of winning you thus because I now know the value you attach to that conquest.

"You can never speak or breathe, or act or think without exciting, more and more, the admiration that I feel for the

graces of your soul and of your body. There is something in you — I know not what it is — something divine, wise, enchanting, which joins in one accord, reflection, honor, pleasure, hope; in other words, which gives to love an extent, an horizon, greater than that of this life. Oh! my angel, may the genius of love be faithful to me, and may the future be ever full of that pure passion by the help of which you have embellished my whole existence.

"When thou art a mother I shall see thee proud of the vigor of thy life, I shall hear thee, in that voice so sweet, with those ideas so delicate, so new, so carefully well-rendered, blessing the love that has refreshed my soul, redeemed my faculties and is my pride, that love from which I draw, as from a magic well-spring, a new life. I am indeed another being. Yes, I will be all you wish me to be; I will become a man who is useful to our country; and on you shall shine the glory, the cause and principle of which will be your approval."

Dear, that is how I am forming him. The style is a little fresh; but a year hence he 'll do better. Louis is in the first transports; but I know he will come to that equable and continued sensation of happiness which a happy marriage brings when a woman and a man, knowing themselves thoroughly and sure of one another, have found the secret of varying the infinite and of putting charm into the very foundations of their life. This glorious secret of truly wedded pairs I see it, and I wish to possess it. Please observe that he thinks himself loved, — ah, the conceit of man! — loved

as though he were not my husband. However, I am not yet beyond that amount of attachment which gives us strength to bear many things. And yet, Louis is most amiable, he has great equability of character; he does *simply* actions which other men would boast of. If I do not love him, he is at least very dear to me.

So, dearest, behold the black hair and the black eyes and what you call my imperial air and person elevated to the rank of sovereign power. Perhaps a few years from now you and I will be laughing together happily in Paris; whence I shall bring you back sometimes to my beautiful oasis in Provence. Oh, Louise! don't lose the beautiful future we could have together. Don't commit those follies your last letter threatened me with. I have married an old young man; do you find some young old one in the Chamber of peers and marry him. That 's in the line of your career — but that Spaniard? oh, no!

XIV.

THE DUC DE SORIA TO THE BARON DE MACUMER.

MADRID.

My dear Brother, — You cannot make me Duc de Soria, without my acting as the Duc de Soria. If I had to think of you as a wanderer, without the comforts that money gives, my happiness would be intolerable to

me. Neither Marie nor I are willing to marry until we know that you accept the sum we have sent you by Urraca. These two millions are the fruit of your own economy and Marie's.

We have prayed for your happiness kneeling together before the altar; and with what fervor! ah, God alone knows that! My brother! surely our prayers will be granted. The love that you seek, the consolation of your exile, will come to you from heaven. Marie wept as she read your letter; you have her utmost admiration.

As for me, I accept your proposal for the sake of our house, but not for my own sake. The king behaved exactly as you expected. Ah, you flung him his satisfaction so disdainfully, as a keeper flings meat to a tiger, that, to avenge you, I longed to make him feel how you had crushed him by your grandeur.

The only thing that I have taken for myself, dear beloved brother, is my happiness, my Marie. For that, I shall ever be to you in my own sight as a creature before his Creator. There will be in my life and in Marie's one day as perfect as that of our happy marriage; I mean the one on which we hear that your heart is understood, that a woman loves you as you should be, as you desire to be loved.

Do not forget that if, as you say, you live in us, we live in you. You can write to us safely under cover

to the Nuncio, sending your letters via Rome. The French ambassador in Rome will no doubt transmit them to the Secretary of State, Monsignore Bemboni, who will receive instructions from the legate. All other ways of communicating would be dangerous.

Adieu, dear exile, dear despoiled one. Be proud of the happiness you have given us if you cannot be happy in it; but God will surely hear our prayers for you.

FERNANDO.

XV.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

AH! my angel, how philosophical marriage has made you! Your dear face must have turned yellow when you wrote me all those dreadful thoughts about human life and our duties.

Do you seriously think you will convert me to a humdrum marriage by this programme of underground labors? Alas! alas! is it to this that all our wise meditations on life and love have brought you? We left the convent clothed with our innocence and armed at all points with reflections; and yet the lance of this first and purely mental experience of things has got through our armor and staggered you. If I did not

know you for the purest and most angelic creature in the world I should say that your calculations showed actual depravity. My dearest, can it be that in the interests of this country life of yours you mean to put your happiness in a pint pot, and treat love as you might your timber! Oh, I'd rather perish through the violent convulsions of my heart than live in the dreariness of your virtuous arithmetic.

You and I are both educated girls, — educated from having deeply reflected on a few things; but, my dearest, philosophy without love, or with a poor or false love, is the most horrible of conjugal hypocrisies. I am afraid the greatest simpleton on earth would sooner or later discover the owl of wisdom blinking in your bower of roses, — a discovery so little encouraging that it is likely to put to flight the warmest passion. You are making destiny for yourself instead of letting it make you. How strangely we two are being twirled about! Much philosophy and little love is your drift; much love and no philosophy is mine. The Julie of Jean-Jacques, whom I was thinking a dreadful pedant, is a mere ignoramus compared to you. Virtue of womanhood! why, you 've measured life from top to toe!

Alas! I am laughing at you, and perhaps you are right. You have immolated your youth in a single day, and you 'll have the vices of age before your time. I

dare say your Louis will be happy. If he loves you, — and I don't doubt he does, — he may never find out that you have behaved in the interests of your family, just as we are told courtesans behave in the interests of their own fortunes; they make men happy, — at least it seems so by the way men go on. A clear-sighted husband would, of course, always continue to love you; but won't he dispense with gratitude to a woman who makes deception a sort of moral corset, as necessary to her life as an ordinary corset to her body?

My dearest, love is to my eyes the principle of all virtues gathered into that image of the Divine. Love, like all principles, cannot be estimated and measured; it is the infinite of our souls. Have n't you been trying to justify to yourself the dreadful position of a girl married to a man she can only esteem? Duty, that 's your rule and measure; but to do your duty from necessity is the morality of atheists; to do it from love, from sentiment, that is the secret law of womanhood. You have made yourself the man, and your Louis will soon find himself the woman.

Oh! my dear Renée, your letter has plunged me into endless meditation. I see plainly that a convent can never take the place of a mother to girls. I entreat you, my noble angel with the black eyes, so pure and proud, so grave, so elegant, think over these first outcries your letter has wrung from me. I am try-

ing to console myself with the thought that at this very moment, while I am lamenting, love may have knocked over all your sage scaffoldings. Well, I might do worse without reasoning, without calculating; passion is an element which may have a logic as cruel as yours.

Monday.

Last night, before going to bed, I sat down at my window to look at the sky, which was sublimely pure. The stars were like silver nails holding up the azure veil. In the silence of the night I could hear the sound of breathing, and by the half-light from the heavens I saw my Spaniard, perched like a squirrel in the branches of a tree on the boulevard, contemplating, no doubt, my windows. The first effect of this discovery was to drive me into the farther corner of my room, with my hands and feet almost paralyzed; but deep below that first sensation of fear, I felt a joy ineffable.

Not one of those clever Frenchmen who want to marry me would think of clambering into an elm at the risk of being seized by the watchman. My Spaniard had probably been there a good long time. Ah! he does not choose to give me any more lessons, but he needs one himself; and he shall have it! If he only knew what I have said to myself about his apparent ugliness! I assure you, Renée, I've been philosophizing, too. It occurred to me that there was something

dreadful in loving handsome men. Is n't it admitting that the senses count for three fourths of love, which ought to be wholly divine?

So, when I got a little over my first fright, I put my head out again to see if he were still there, and I was well punished for it. With some sort of tube he fired a letter artistically rolled up in a leaden ball through the window. "Good heavens!" I thought, "can he suppose I left my window open for that? But if I shut it suddenly I shall seem to admit it." So I did better; I went back to the window as if I had not heard the noise of his note falling, and as if I had seen nothing. Then I said aloud, "Do come here, Griffith, and look at the stars," — Griffith being sound asleep, like a true old maid as she is.

When the Moor heard me he glided down with the rapidity of a shadow. He must have been half-dead with fright, like myself, for I did not hear him walk away, and I dare say he stayed crouching at the foot of the elm. After a good quarter of an hour, during which time I bathed in the blue of heaven and floundered in the ocean of curiosity, I closed my window and jumped into bed to unroll my note with all the care they give to the papyri in Naples. My fingers touched fire. "What horrible power is this that man exercises over me?" I said to myself, and I put the paper to a candle thinking to burn it; then a thought

restrained me. What could he have to say to me secretly? However, my dear, I did burn his letter unread, thinking that if all the other girls in the universe would have devoured it, I, Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu could not and would not do so.

The next night, at the Italiens, there he was at his post! But, constitutional minister that he once was, I am certain he did not detect by any movement or attitude of mine the agitation in my soul; I behaved precisely as if nothing had happened the night before. I was satisfied with myself; but I must say he looked rather sad. Poor man! it is so natural in Spain to make love through the windows. During the acts he walked about the corridor. The secretary of the Spanish legation saw him there and told me an act of his that is really sublime. Being Duc de Soria he was to have married one of the richest heiresses of Spain, the young Princess Marie Heredia, whose fortune would have lessened the trials of his exile. But it seems that contrary to the will of their parents, who had betrothed them in childhood, Marie loved the younger brother; and my Felipe gave her up to him, and allowed the king of Spain to take his own rank and fortune away from him and give them to this brother.

I said to the young secretary, "He probably did it in the simplest manner."

"Then you know him?" he said naïvely. My mother smiled.

"What will become of him now?" I asked. "I am told he is condemned to death."

"Yes, in Spain; but he can live in Sardinia. The King of Sardinia granted him a passport as Baron de Macumer, — though not without making some difficulty," added the young diplomat. "But he is really a Sardinian subject. He has magnificent feudal estates on the island, with power of life and death. He has a palace at Sassari. If Ferdinand VII. dies, Macumer will enter diplomacy, and the court of Turin will give him an embassy. Though young —"

"Young? is he young?" I said.

"Yes, Mademoiselle; though young, he is one of the most distinguished men in Spain."

I was turning my opera-glass round the theatre as the secretary spoke, and seemed to be paying him very little attention; but, between ourselves, I was in despair at having burned that letter. I wonder how such a man expresses himself when he loves — and he *does* love me. To be loved, adored in secret! to have in this audience, made up of all the greatest men in Paris, a man, a great man, of my own, and no one to know it! Oh, Renée, I began to see the use of balls and parties, and to feel that other people are necessary to one's love, if only to sacrifice them all to the beloved. I felt a new and happy being within me. All my vanities, my self-love, my pride were being stroked. God knows what sort of a glance I cast about me.

"Ah! you sly puss!" whispered my mother, smiling.

Yes, my very shrewd mother detected a secret joy in my behavior; I was forced to lower my flag to that astute woman. Those four words of hers taught me more of the science of the world than I have learned in a year — for here it is March. Alas! the Italian opera will be over in a month. What will become of me without that divine music if my heart is full of love?

My dear, when I went home I opened my window, with the resolution of a Chaulieu, to look at a heavy shower. Oh! if men only knew the powerful seduction they exercise over us by heroic deeds what great things they would do; even cowards would be heroes. What I had just heard of my Spaniard had put me into a fever. I was certain he was there — waiting to throw me another letter. This time I did not burn it. I read it.

Here, Madame philosopher, is the first love-letter I ever received; now we have each had one: —

Louise, I do not love you because of your sublime beauty; I do not love you because of your broad mind, the nobility of your sêntiments, the infinite grace you impart to all things; nor yet because of your pride, your regal disdain for all that is not within your sphere, — a disdain which does not, in you, exclude kindness, for your charity is that of the angels. Louise, I love you because you have stooped from those proud grandeurs to comfort a poor exile; with a glance, a gesture, you have consoled a man for being so far beneath

you that he could ask nothing but your pity, your generous pity. You are the only woman in the world who has ever softened for me the hard indifference of her eyes; and since that beneficent glance fell upon me — on me but a grain of dust — and I obtained that which I never had in my days of power and grandeur, I have longed to tell you, Louise, how dear you are to me, and that I love you for yourself without one ulterior thought; in this I go far beyond the conditions you yourself have given to a perfect love.

Learn, then, idol placed by me in highest heaven, that there is in this world a last descendant of the Saracens whose life belongs to you; from whom you can ask all as from a slave; who will be honored in his own eyes by doing your bidding. I have given myself to you forever, — solely for the joy of giving that self in return for one glance, one motion of your hand stretched out *one morning* to your Spanish teacher. You have a servant, Louise, and nothing else. No, I dare not think that I can ever be loved; but perhaps you will endure my presence because of my devotion.

Since that morning when you smiled to me, as a noble maiden divining the wretchedness of my solitary and betrayed heart, I have enthroned you; you are the sovereign mistress of my life, the queen of my thoughts, the divinity of my soul, the light that shines within me, the flower of my flowers, the fragrance of the air I breathe, the richness of my blood, the softness of my slumber. A single thought troubles this happiness. You are still ignorant that you have beside you a limitless devotion, a faithful heart, a blind slave, a mute servant, a fortune, — for I am now but the depositary of all that I possess; all is yours. You do not know that you own a heart to which you can trust all;

the heart of a parent from whom you can ask all, to whom you may look by right for protection; the heart of a friend, the heart of a brother. All the true sentiments of such hearts are lacking to your life; I see that. I have detected the secret of your home, your isolation!

My boldness comes from my desire to let you see the extent of your possessions. Accept all, Louise; in so doing you will give me the only life there is for me in this world, — that of absolute devotion. In placing the badge of servitude around my neck you risk nothing. I will never ask anything from you but the happiness of knowing myself yours. Do not even tell me that you cannot love me; it must be so, — I know that. I know that I must love from afar, without hope and for my love's sake only.

I would fain know whether you consent to accept me as your servant, and I have sought for some means to make this known to me which shall not infringe upon your dignity. Will you answer me to-morrow evening at the opera-house by holding in your hand a white and a red camellia, — the image of a man's blood at the orders of a purity he adores; that shall be my answer. At all times, ten years hence, as to-morrow, whatever you wish that is possible for a man to do, shall be done when you ask it of

Your happy servant,

FELIPE HENAREZ.

My dear, please admit that the great seigneurs know how to love. He bounds like an African lion! What restrained ardor, what faith, what sincerity, what grandeur of soul in his humility! I felt very small, and I asked myself in a bewildered way, "What 's to be done?"

It is the privilege of a great man to upset all ordinary calculations. He is sublime and touching and artless and gigantic. In one single letter he has gone far beyond all those of Lovelace, and Saint-Preux as well. Oh, here 's true love! — no shams or trickery here! Love is or is not; and when it *is*, it appears in all its immensity.

So here I am, compelled to lay aside my coquetry. Refuse, or accept! I am held between those two terms without a pretext to shelter irresolution. All discussion is denied. It is not Paris, it is Spain, it is the East, — yes, it is the Saracen who speaks, who kneels before the Catholic Eve and offers her his scimitar, his horse, his head. Shall I accept this Moorish relic?

Read and reread that Saracenically Spanish letter, my Renée, and you 'll see that true love is worth more than all the Judaic stipulations of your philosophy. Renée! Renée your letter weighs on my heart; you 've commonplaced all life for me. Why should I mind you? Why should I play any such part as you advise? Am I not eternally mistress of this lion who subdues his roars to worshipping sighs? Oh! but how much he must have roared all to himself in his den in the rue Hillerin-Bertin! I know where he lives, I have his card: F. Baron de Macumer.

Well, he has deprived me of all chance of arguing the matter; there is nothing I can do but fling those

camellias at his head. What infernal cleverness love, pure, true, artless love, possesses! It seems the noblest thing on earth to the heart of a poor woman helplessly reduced to simple and easy action. Oh, the East! I've read the Arabian Nights and this is the very essence of it: two flowers, and all is said! We've done fourteen volumes of Clarissa Harlowe with a single posy! I twist and twirl before that letter, like a bit of twine in the fire. To take or not to take those two camellias? Yes, or no; kill, or make alive!

A voice cries to me, "Test him!" — yes, I'll test him.

XVI.

SAME TO SAME.

I AM dressed — in white, with white camellias in my hair and a white camellia in my hand; my mother carries red ones, and I can take one from her if I want to. I have a desperate desire to sell him his red camellia at the price of some agony. I shall hesitate; in fact, I really sha'n't decide till I am on the ground.

I am lovely. Griffith begged me to let her look at me for a few minutes. The solemnity of this occasion, the drama of this consent, has brought the color into my cheeks. I've *two* red camellias there side by side with the white ones.

One o'clock.

I was much admired; but one man adored me. He dropped his head on his breast when he saw the white camellia in my hand; but I saw him turn as white as the flower itself when I took a red camellia from my mother's bunch. To come with the two flowers might have been accidental, but the action of taking one was an answer; it was even beyond what was asked of me. The opera was "Romeo and Juliet;" but as you don't know what the duet between the two lovers is, you can't understand the happiness of two neophytes of love as they listened to that divine expression of tenderness.

I've gone to bed listening to steps pacing the sidewalk of the boulevard. Oh! my dear angel, fire is in my heart, in my head. What is he doing? what is he thinking? Has he thoughts that I know nothing of? Will he really be the slave forever he talks about? How can I make sure? Can he have the slightest feeling in his heart that my acceptance lacked dignity? What *is* he thinking, in short? I am delivered over to the quibbling discussions of those women of "The Grand Cyrus"—to all the subtleties of the Courts of Love. Does he know that in love the slightest actions of women are the result of a world of reflections, inward struggles, lost victories? Oh, what is he thinking of at this moment? How can I reach him? how can

I order him to write me every evening the history of his day? He is my slave, and I can make him do what I choose. Yes, I 'll overwhelm him with work.

Sunday morning.

I could not sleep till morning. It is now twelve o'clock and I have made Griffith write the following letter:—

To Monsieur le Baron de Macumer:

Mademoiselle de Chaulieu desires me, Monsieur le baron, to request that you will return to me the copy of a letter, written to her by one of her friends and copied in her handwriting, which you have carried away with you.

Receive, etc.

S. Griffith.

My dear, Griffith departed to the rue Hillerin-Bertin; she gave her missive to my slave, who returned my epistle in an envelope; it was stained with tears! Oh! my dear, he must have cared for it; but he obeyed me. Any other man would have refused, and written me a charming letter full of flatteries. But the Saracen did what he promised to do,—he obeyed; I cried about it.

XVII.

SAME TO SAME.

April 2.

YESTERDAY the weather was superb; I dressed myself like a girl beloved who wants to please. My father has given me, at my request, the prettiest little equipage you can imagine, — dapple-gray horses and a calèche of the utmost elegance. I tried it to-day for the first time. I must say I looked like a flower under a parasol lined with white silk.

As I drove up the Avenue des Champs-Élysées I saw my Abencerrage riding toward me on a horse of wonderful beauty. The men (who nowadays make themselves look like grooms) all stopped to look at him. He bowed to me, and I made him a little sign of encouragement; he slackened his pace beside the carriage so that I was able to say: —

"I hope you were not annoyed, Monsieur le baron, that I asked for that letter? It must be useless to you, for," I added in a low voice, "you have gone beyond its programme. You have a horse there which makes you very conspicuous." "My bailiff in Sardinia sent him to me," he replied. "The horse has an Arabian pedigree, and was raised on my estate."

This morning, my dear, Macumer rode an English

horse, a chestnut, very handsome though it did not excite the same attention. My few words of sarcasm had sufficed. The Duc d'Angoulême has bought the Arabian. My slave saw that he was stepping out of the simplicity I required by drawing the attention of the crowd upon him. A man should be remarked for himself, and never for his horse or the things about him. To ride too showy a horse seems to me as ridiculous as to wear a great diamond in one's shirt. I was delighted to catch him in a fault, — though perhaps a little vanity might be permitted to a poor exile.

All this nonsense pleases me. Oh! my dear old philosopher, do please enjoy my loves in return for the long faces I pull over your gloomy reasonings. Dear Philip the Second in petticoats, sit here beside me in my pretty carriage; do you see the velvet glance, humble, but intense, proud of its servitude, which a man with a red camellia (my livery) casts upon me as he passes? What a light love casts! How clear are all things to me now! How well I read my Paris! I see the wit and wisdom of it now! Yes, love is sweeter, grander, more charming here than elsewhere. I know now that I could never, never torment a fool nor gain the slightest empire over one. It takes a brilliant man to understand us, and on no other can we play as on an instrument. Oh! poor friend, I forgot! forgive me, there 's your l'Estorade; but then, did n't you tell me

you were going to make a genius of him? Ah, I begin to see why! you are bringing him up on a bottle to make him brilliant enough to understand you some day. Adieu, adieu; I 'm silly, so I won't continue.

XVIII.

MADAME DE L' ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

Dear angel, — Though I ought to say dear demon, — you have grieved me without intending it; if we were not one and the same soul I should say you had wounded me; but we can't wound ourselves, you know.

How plainly I see that you have never once let your thoughts rest seriously on that word *indissoluble*, applied to the contract which binds a woman to a man. I don't wish to contradict philosophers and legislators; they are fully able to contradict themselves; but, dearest, this I must say: by rendering marriage irrevocable and by imposing on all an identical and pitiless rule, they have made of each union a thing by itself absolutely dissimilar from other unions, as dissimilar as individuals are among themselves. Each has its different internal laws; country married life, where two beings are forced to live perpetually in each other's presence, is not the same as city married life, which

distractions color. A household in Paris, where life rushes on like a torrent, cannot be the same as a home in the provinces, where life is less agitated. If conditions vary with places, how much more do they vary according to natures. The wife of a man of genius has only to let him guide her, while the wife of a fool must take the reins and feel herself the more intelligent of the two, under pain of incurring great misfortunes. Perhaps, after all, reason and reflection do lead to what is called vitiation — if vitiation, for us, is the introduction of calculation into feelings. A passion which reasons is vitiated; it is beautiful only when spontaneous, involuntary, in one of those fine gushes of feeling which exclude all egotism.

Ah! sooner or later, my dearest, you will say to yourself: "Yes, deception is as necessary to a woman as her corset, if by deception is meant the silence of her who has the courage to hold her tongue, if by deception is meant the wise calculation of the future. All married women learn to their cost that social laws are incompatible in many points with the laws of nature. We might have a dozen children by marrying as young as we are now; and if we had them it would be a crime: we should bring into the world twelve sorrows; we should deliver over twelve sweet beings to poverty and despair, — whereas two children are two happinesses, two benefits, two creations in har-

mony with the manners, customs, and laws of the present time. Natural law and the Code are antagonistic, and we women are the ground on which they fight. Do you apply the word calculation to the wisdom of a wife who feels bound to watch that the family is not ruined through her? That is a calculation which you will see for yourself some day, Baronne de Macumer, when you are the proud and happy wife of the man who adores you. Or rather, that superior man will save you the calculation by making it for you.

You see, my dear, heedless one, that I have studied the Code in its relations to conjugal love on behalf of both of us. You will some day know that we must give account to none but ourselves and God of the means we employ to perpetuate happiness in the bosom of our homes. Better the judgment and the calculation exercised in that than unreflecting love which ends in weariness, in estrangement, in disunion. Ah! my dear, we have many sublime lies to act in order to be the noble creatures we should be in fulfilling our duty.

You tax me with calculation, that is, with duplicity, because I hold myself in reserve with Louis; but may not too intimate and familiar a knowledge be the cause of disunion? I do try to occupy him much in order to distract him from me; and I do it for his own happiness; that is surely not an evil calculation. If ten-

derness is inexhaustible, the passion of love is not; and it is, believe me, Louise, a true enterprise for an honest woman to wisely distribute it over the whole of life.

At the risk of seeming execrable to you, I must tell you that I persist in my principles, and think them very grand and very generous. Virtue, my darling, is a principle which shows itself differently according to its surroundings; the virtue of Provence, and that of Constantinople, and of London, and of Paris, have totally dissimilar appearances without ceasing to be virtue. The fabric of every human life is woven of threads unlike those of its neighbors, though seen at a certain height they all look alike. If I wished to see Louis unhappy, and bring about an eventual separation both of body and mind, I should cease to maintain my own being, and should put myself at his bidding. I have not had, like you, the happiness of meeting with a superior man, but perhaps I may have the pleasure of making him one. Yes, I'll give you a rendezvous five years hence in Paris, and then perhaps you will tell me that I was mistaken, and that Louis de l'Estorade was always a remarkable man.

As for these glories of love, these great emotions which I feel only through you, as for those nocturnal perches in elm-trees by moonlight, with all their accompanying adoration and worship, I knew I must renounce all that. Yes, my Louise, your blooming into

life is to be what you choose to make it; mine is circumscribed, it is bounded by La Crampade; and yet you reproach me for the precautions which my poor little, fragile happiness requires in order to be rich and lasting and sacred! I wish to put the graces of love into wifehood, and you have almost made me blush for myself. Which of us two is right, which wrong? Perhaps we are both right and both wrong; perhaps society sells our laces and our titles and our children very dear to us.

I too, have my red camellias; they are on my lips, they blossom in smiles for the two beings, father and son, to whom I am devoted, slave and mistress both. But oh! my dearest, your last letters have made me feel what I have lost. They have taught me the extent of the sacrifices of a married woman. I had never seriously looked at that broad, free, beautiful expanse in which you are now bounding, and I don't deny that a tear or two came into my eyes as I read your account of it. But a little regret does n't mean a change of opinion, though it may be cousin-german to it! You say marriage has made me a philosopher. Alas! no; I felt this when those tears came as I read of you, swept onward in a torrent of love. But my father made me read one of the most profound writers of our time, the man who has inherited Bossuet's mantle, — a stern teacher, whose pages compel conviction. While

you have been reading "Corinne," I have been reading Bonald, and there's the whole secret of my philosophy; the Family, sacred and strong, has appeared like a vision before me. I swear by Bonald that your father was right in what he preached to you.

Adieu, my dear imagination, my friend, you who are my romance, my ecstasy!

XIX.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

You are a love of a woman, my Renée; and now I'll agree that it is fair and honest to be deceitful and calculating; will that satisfy you? Besides, the man who loves us belongs to us, — we have the right to make him a fool or a man of genius; between ourselves, we generally make a fool of him. You are going to make yours a man of genius, and conceal how you do it; two magnificent performances! Ah, if there were no paradise you'd be well caught; for you are devoting yourself to voluntary martyrdom. You are trying to render your man ambitious, and to keep him loving. Child that you are! is n't it enough for *you* to keep him loving? How far is calculation virtue, or is virtue calculation, hey? Well, we won't quarrel over that question; as Bonald is living we can refer it to him. We

are, and we intend to be, virtuous, but oh, Renée, at this moment I think that in spite of your philosophical rascality, you are better than I.

Yes, I'm a horribly deceitful girl; I love Felipe, and I hide it from him with infamous dissimulation. I'd give anything to see him jump from that tree to the top of the wall, and from the wall to my balcony; and if he did, I should annihilate him with my disdain. You see how terribly truthful I can be. What stops me from being as true to him? What power hinders me from telling that dear Felipe the happiness his love — his pure, entire, lofty, secret, overflowing love — has poured in floods into my heart?

Madame de Mirbel is painting a miniature of me; when finished, I mean to give it to him, my dear.

A thing that surprises me every day, more and more, is the activity which love brings into life. What interest there is in every hour, every action, in the least little things! and what a delightful jumbling of past and future in the present! We live in all three tenses of the verb. Will this last always? Oh! answer me; tell me what happiness is; does it calm, or irritate? I am filled with a mortal uneasiness; I don't know how to behave; I feel, in my heart, a power which is dragging me toward him, in spite of reason and all social conventions. The contentment Felipe shows in being mine, his love at a distance, his obedi-

ence irritate me, just as his profound respect irritated when he was only my Spanish teacher. I feel inclined to cry out as he rides past me: "Idiot! if you love the mere outside of me, what would it be if you knew me truly?"

Oh! Renée, I hope you burn my letters! I'll burn all yours. If other eyes than our own should read these thoughts that go from my heart to yours, I'd send Felipe to tear them out,— or kill their owners for better safety.

Monday.

Ah! Renée, how can we sound a man's heart? My father is to bring your Vicomte de Bonald to the house and present him to me, and I'll ask him that question; if he is so wise he certainly can answer it. God is fortunate in being able to read all hearts. Am I still an angel to that man? That's the whole question.

If ever, in look, or gesture, or tone of a word, I perceived the slightest diminution of the respect he felt for me when he was my teacher of languages, I feel I have the strength to throw the whole thing over and forget him. "Why these grand words, these mighty resolutions?" I hear you say. Ah! that's just it, my dear; something has happened.

My charming father, who behaves to me exactly like an old *cavaliere servente* to an Italian woman, has had, as I told you, my portrait painted by Madame de Mir-

bel. I managed, however, to have a good copy made for the duke, and I sent the original to Felipe. The miniature went yesterday, together with these few words: —

"Don Felipe, your absolute devotion is accepted in blind confidence. Time will show whether this is not attributing too much nobility to a man."

The gift was great; it looks like a promise and, oh horrors! an invitation; but, what you will think worse still, I wanted it to express a promise and an invitation without going so far as to give them. If in his answer there is a single "my Louise" or even "Louise," he is lost.

Tuesday.

No! he 's not lost. This Spanish grandee of mine is an adorable lover. Here is his letter: —

"Every moment that I pass without seeing you is nevertheless filled with you. I close my eyes to all things else and fasten them in meditation on your image. For all time they will rest upon that marvellous ivory — that talisman, I should say — where your blue eyes speak, and art becomes reality. The delay of this letter is caused by my enjoyment of that contemplation in which I said to you all that I must here restrain.

"Yes, since yesterday, alone with you, I have yielded myself up, for the first time in my life, to complete, entire, infinite happiness. If you could see where I have placed you — between the Virgin and God — you would understand

the emotions in which I have passed the night. But I will not tell them to you lest I offend you; it would be torture to me to receive one glance devoid of that angelic kindness which is now my life.

"If — if, queen of my heart and life, you would deign to grant me a thousandth part of the love I feel for you! The *if* of that constant prayer plays havoc with my soul. I am torn between belief and fear, between life and death, between light and darkness.

"A criminal is not more agitated while the verdict is deliberated than I am while I write these words. The smile upon your lips, to which I look at every moment, alone can calm the fear I feel of displeasing you. Since I came into the world, no one, not even my mother, has ever smiled upon me. The beautiful young girl who was destined to be my wife repulsed my heart and loved my brother. My efforts as a statesman were defeated. I saw in the eyes of my king only hatred and a desire for vengeance. We were enemies from our youth up; he considered as a mortal insult to himself, the vote by which the Cortes raised me to power. However strong a soul may be, doubt will at least enter it. Besides, I know myself; I know the ill grace of my appearance; I feel how difficult it is to estimate a heart through such a covering. To be loved, — it had passed into a dream before I met you. When I attached myself to you I knew that devotion, the devotion that expects nothing, could alone excuse me.

"As I contemplate your portrait, as I drink in that smile so full of divine promises, a hope that I will not listen to shines upon my soul. The light of dawn is struggling with the night of doubt. I fear to offend you by suffering it to break.

"No, you cannot love me yet, I feel it. But, little by little, as you learn the power, the duration, the extent of my unspeakable affection, you will grant it a little place in your life. If my ambition offends you, tell me so without anger, and I will drive it back into my heart. But if you will try to love me do not let me know of it unless you are certain; for the happiness of my whole life lies in serving you — you only."

My dear, in reading those last words I thought I saw him as pale as he was that night when, by taking the camellias, I showed that I accepted his devotion. I read in these submissive phrases something other than the flowers of rhetoric which every lover uses, and I felt a great commotion in myself, — I breathed the breath of happiness.

The weather is shocking; it is impossible to drive out without giving rise to suspicion; even my mother, who often goes out in the rain, has had to stay at home.

Wednesday evening.

I have just seen *him* at the Opera. My dear, he is no longer the same man. He came to our box with the Spanish ambassador, who presented him. After looking in my eyes and seeing that his audacity did not displease me, he seemed not to know what to do with his arms and legs, and he called Madame d'Espard "mademoiselle." But his eyes flashed a brighter light than

that of the chandeliers. At last he went away, as if he feared to commit some folly.

"The Baron de Macumer is in love," said Madame de Maufrigneuse to my mother.

"That would be strange in a fallen minister," replied my mother.

I had the strength to look at Madame d'Espard, Madame de Maufrigneuse, and my mother with the curiosity of a person who does not understand a foreign language and is trying to guess what is being said; but inwardly I was grasped by a passionate joy, in which, it seemed to me, my soul was bathing. There is but one word to express what I feel, — rapture. Felipe loves so truly that I think him worthy to be loved. I am the principle of his life, and I hold in my hand the thread that guides his thought. And now (as you and I must tell the whole truth to each other) I feel a violent desire to have him surmount all barriers to reach me and demand of me to be his. I want this in order that I may know whether his passionate love could be calmed and humbled by a look.

Ah! my dear, I stop, trembling. I hear a step, a noise without. Yes, from my window I can see him on the wall, risking his life.

I made but one sign; he sprang from the wall, which is ten feet high, and ran down the road to a spot where I could see him, as if to show me he was not hurt.

This care for my feelings, when he must have been quite giddy from his fall, touched me so much that I am crying, though I don't know why. Poor ugly man! why was he there? What did he want to say to me?

I dare not write any more of my thoughts. I will go to bed and dream of joy, and of all that you and I would say to each other were we together. Adieu, dear silent one. I have no time now to scold you for your silence, but it is a whole month since I heard from you. What has happened in the mean time?

XX.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

May.

If love is the life of the world, why have stern philosophers suppressed it in marriage? Why does society make it a law to sacrifice the Woman to the Family, creating thus a secret struggle in the bosom of marriage, —a struggle which society foresaw as so dangerous that it has invented powers with which to arm the man against us. I see in marriage two opposing forces which legislators ought to have united. Can they be united? that is the question I ask myself as I read your letters. Ah! dearest, a single one of those letters is

enough to ruin the edifice built up with so much care by my great writer, — an edifice in which I was sheltering myself with quiet satisfaction!

The laws were made by old men, and women know it. They have sagely decreed that conjugal love exempt from passion does not degrade us, and that a woman ought to give herself without love when the law permits a man to make her his. Concerned only for the Family, they have imitated Nature, whose sole purpose is to perpetuate the species. I was a being formerly, I am now a thing! More than one tear have I shed in secret. Louise, how is it that our destinies are so unlike? With you, love will enlarge your soul, your virtue will lie in passion; your duty, if you marry Felipe, will be the sweetest, the most expansive of all sentiments. Where lies the meaning of this difference in our fates? Our future is big with the answer; I await it with feverish curiosity. You love, you are adored; oh! dearest, give yourself wholly to that beautiful poem we studied so much. The beauty of woman, so delicate, so spiritualized in you, was surely given by God that she might charm and please, — that must be His design.

Nevertheless, my dearest, keep back the secret of your tenderness; subject Felipe to those subtle tests we so often talked of, and learn if he is worthy of you. Above all, ask yourself if you love him even more than

he loves you. Louise, you are still free; do not risk the dangerous bargain of an irrevocable marriage without security, I implore you. Sometimes a gesture, a word, a look in a conversation without witnesses, when souls are off their guard and stripped of worldly hypocrisies, reveal great precipices.

You do not know with what anxiety I think of you. In spite of distance I see you, I hear you, I feel all that you are feeling. Do not fail to write to me and tell me all; omit nothing. Your letters bring passionate emotions to my simple, tranquil life, unvaried as a high-road. The most that happens here, my dearest, is a sort of game that I play with myself, passing alternately from discouragement to hope; but I will write of this later. Perhaps I have asked more happiness of life than life can give. I suppose we must when young be always trying to make the real and the ideal harmonize. My reflections, and at this moment I am making them in solitude, sitting under the shadow of a rock in my park, have brought me to think that love in marriage is an accident, on which it is impossible to base a law which could or should rule all. My philosopher of the Aveyron, Bonald, has good reason to consider the Family the only possible social unity, and to make woman subject to it, as she has been through all time. The solution of this great question, terrible for us, lies, I believe, in our first child. For this reason,

I desire to be a mother, — if only to give food to the craving activity of my soul.

Louis is always most adorably kind; his love is active, and my tenderness is abstract; he is happy; he gathers his flowers, and pays no heed to the earth that produces them. Happy egotism! No matter what it costs me, I lend myself to all his illusions, just as a mother (according to my ideas of motherhood) wearies herself to give pleasure to her child. In fact, the little familiar name by which I call him in our home is "my child." I await the fruit of all my sacrifices, which are a secret between God and you and me. Maternity is an enterprise in which I have opened an enormous credit; it owes me so much that I fear it can never pay me in full; it is charged with developing my energy, enlarging my heart, and compensating me for all things by illimitable joys. Oh! my God, grant I be not defrauded! there lies all my future, and — oh, terrifying thought! — my virtue.

XXI.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

June.

My dear married darling, — Your letter came just in time to justify me to myself for a daring per-

formance on which I have been thinking night and day. I certainly have a craving for unknown, or, if you choose to say so, forbidden things, which makes me rather uneasy, for it is the sign of a war going on within me between the laws of the world and those of nature. I don't know if nature in me is stronger than society, but I often catch myself making compromises between those two powers.

Well, to speak plainly, I wanted to talk with Felipe, alone, at night, under the lindens in the garden. Most assuredly that wish makes me deserve the name of "sly puss" the duchess bestowed upon me. Nevertheless, I think it a very prudent and wise proceeding. While rewarding the many nights he has spent at the foot of my wall, I should be able to find out what Felipe thought of my proceeding, and that would give me a clue to judge him by. If he worships that wrong proceeding at a respectful distance, he shall be my husband; if he is not even more respectful and trembling than when he bows to me on horseback in the Champs-Élysées, I will never see him again.

As for the world, I risk less in seeing my lover in this way than by smiling on him in the salons of Madame de Maufrigneuse or Madame de Beauséant, where we are surrounded by spies; for God knows how they would watch a girl suspected of noticing a man like Macumer. But oh! if you only knew how

agitated I was in my own mind while I imagined this scheme, and tried to think of some way to carry it out. I did so regret you were not here; we might have talked it over for hours, lost in a labyrinth of uncertainty, and fancying all sorts of things in a first interview, alone, by night, in shade and silence, beneath the lindens silvered with such a moon! — oh, think of it! But I had to tremble and palpitate all alone, saying to myself, "Oh! Renée, where are you?" So when your letter came, it fired the powder and my last scruples were blown up. I threw my adorer a little note containing a key to the garden gate and these words: —

"It is desirable to prevent you from committing further follies. By breaking your neck you will injure the reputation of the person you say you love. Are you worthy of another proof of esteem? Do you deserve to be spoken to to-morrow night, at the hour when the moon casts the shadow of the lindens on the garden?"

Last night, just as Griffith was going to bed, I said to her: —

"Take a shawl and come with me, my dear; I am going to the end of the garden, and want no one to know it."

She did n't say a word, but followed me.

What sensations, oh, my Renée! After waiting a little while in a sort of charming agony, I saw him,

gliding along like a shadow. When I had crossed the garden without disaster I said to Griffith: —

"Don't be surprised. The Baron de Macumer is here, and that is the reason why I have brought you with me."

She did n't say a word.

"What do you wish of me?" said Felipe, in a voice that sounded as though he were beside himself.

"I wish to say to you that which I cannot write," I replied.

Griffith walked a few steps away. The night was one of those balmy nights fragrant with flowers. At that moment I felt an intoxicating pleasure in being alone with him in the soft twilight of the lindens, beyond which the garden and the house shone white in the moonlight. This contrast seemed a vague image of our love, about to pass from mystery to the dazzling publicity of marriage. After an instant given to the pleasure of the situation I said: —

"Though I am not afraid of calumny, I do not wish you to climb into that tree again," pointing to the elm, "nor on that wall. We have played school-girl and school-boy long enough; let us lift our actions to the level of our positions. If you had killed yourself when you jumped I should have been dishonored."

I looked at him; he was white as a sheet.

"And if you were detected here," I went on, "either my mother or I would be suspected."

"Forgive me!" he said, in a feeble voice.

"You may pass along the boulevard," I added; "I shall hear your step, and if I wish to see you I will open my window. But I shall not allow you to incur, or incur myself, that danger unless there is some strong reason for it. Why have you forced me, by your imprudence, to commit an imprudence myself, and risk giving you a bad opinion of me?"

I saw the tears in his eyes, and I felt they were the finest answer in the world.

"You must know," I said, smiling, "that my present act is excessively rash."

After one or two turns in silence under the trees he seemed to recover speech.

"You must think me stupid," he said; "but I am so drunk with happiness that I have neither strength nor mind. But be sure of this: you sanctify all actions, to my eyes, by the mere fact that you do them. The respect I have for you is only second to that I feel to God. Besides, Miss Griffith is here."

"She is here for others, but not for us, Felipe," I said hastily.

My dear, he understood me!

"I know," he said, giving me a most humble look, "that whether she were here or not, all would be between us as though she saw us. If we are not in presence of men, we are in presence of God, and our own self-respect is more to us than that of the world."

"Thank you, Felipe," I said, giving him my hand with a gesture you ought to have seen. "A woman, and I am a woman, is always inclined to love a man who understands her — oh! only inclined," I added; "I don't wish you to feel more hope than I am willing to give. My heart will belong only to the man who knows how to read it and comprehend it. Our sentiments, without being absolutely alike, ought to turn in the same direction and be at an equal height. I do not want to boast of myself; for certain good qualities that I think I have may be partly faults; but, such as they are, if I did not have them I should be wretched."

"After having accepted me as your servant, you permitted me to love you," he said trembling, and looking at me as he said each word; "I have more than I originally asked for."

"Well," I said quickly, "your lot is better than mine. I should not be sorry to exchange, — but that is your affair."

"It is my turn now to thank you," he said. "I know the duty of a loyal lover. I must prove to you that I am worthy of you, and you have the right to test me as long as you please. You may — yes, you shall reject me if I betray your trust."

"I know you love me," I answered. "Up to this time" (and I emphazied the words cruelly) "I like no one better; that is why you are here now."

We then walked up and down, talking together; and I must admit that my Spaniard when at his ease displayed true eloquence of heart as he expressed to me, not his passion, but his tenderness; he explained his feelings by an adorable comparison with the love of the divine. His vibrating voice, which gives a peculiar value to his ideas, in themselves so delicate, was like the notes of a nightingale. He spoke low in the middle tones of his delicious organ, and his sentences came rapidly like an effervescence; his heart overflowed in them.

"Enough," I said, "or I shall stay here longer than I ought."

With a gesture I dismissed him.

"So you have engaged yourself, Mademoiselle," said Griffith.

"Perhaps so if it were in England, but not in France," I answered, carelessly. "I wish to make a love-marriage, and not to be mistaken, that's all."

You see, my dear, love did n't come to me; I behaved like Mahomet with his mountain.

Friday.

I have seen my slave again. He has grown timid; he has a mysterious, worshipful air which I like; he seems to have a deep sense of my glory and power. But nothing in his looks or manner will give the gossips of society the slightest suspicion of the infinite love that my eyes can see in him.

And yet, my dear, I am not carried away, mastered, subjugated; on the contrary, I master, I subjugate. In short, I reason. Ah! I wish I could get back that fear I felt when the teacher fascinated me. There must be two loves: the one that commands, and the one that obeys. They are distinct, and they give birth to two passions; and one is not the other. Perhaps a woman ought to know both to square her account with life. Do these two passions unite? Can a man in whom we inspire love inspire us with love in return? Will Felipe some day be my master? Shall I tremble before him as he trembles before me? These questions make me shudder. He is very blind. If I'd been he, I should have seen that Mademoiselle de Chaulieu under those lindens was coquettishly cold, starched, and calculating. No, this is not loving; it is only playing with fire. Felipe still pleases me, but I now find myself quite calm and at my ease. No more obstacles — dreadful thought! Everything in me has flattened down; I'm afraid to question myself. He made a great mistake to hide the violence of his love; he left me mistress of myself. Yes, dear, sweet as the remembrance is of that half-hour under the trees it does not compare to the emotions I had in saying: "Shall I go, or shall I not go? Shall I write, or shall I not write?"

Is this the way it will be with all pleasures?

passion = hope + doubt

Would n't it be better to keep putting them off, rather than take them and enjoy them? Is hope so much better than possession? Are the rich the poor, the gainers losers? Have we, you and I, stretched feelings too much by over-developing our imagination? Sometimes that idea actually freezes me. Do you know why? I dream of going to the end of the garden without Griffith. Where should I get to then? Imagination has no limit, but satisfaction has. Dear philosopher in a corset, tell me how to reconcile these two conditions of a woman's life. One thing is certain, I cannot be satisfied with things as they are.

XXII.

LOUISE TO FELIPE.

I AM not pleased with you. If you cannot weep over Racine's Bérénice, if you do not think it the most dreadful of tragedies, you do not comprehend me, and we shall never understand each other. Let us part; forget me; for if you do not respond to my feelings in essential matters I shall forget you, — or rather, you will become nothing to me, as if you had never existed.

Yesterday, at Madame d'Espard's, you assumed an air of satisfaction which supremely displeased me. You seemed so sure of being loved. Moreover the independence of your mind alarmed me. Instead of

being absorbed in your love, you were intent on making witty speeches. That 's not the way with true believers; they are always humble before divinity. If I am not in your eyes a being superior to all other women, if you do not see in me the very source of your life, then I am less than a woman because only a woman.

You have roused in me a feeling of distrust, Felipe; it will out; for when I consider our past I think I have reason to be distrustful. Let me tell your Excellency, the constitutional minister of all the Spains, that I have deeply reflected on the unhappy condition of my sex. My Innocency has held torches in both hands without burning herself. Therefore listen to what my youthful experience has told me; I repeat it for your benefit:

In all other earthly things duplicity, unfaithfulness, and broken promises have judges who inflict punishments; but it is not so with love, which is forced to be victim, accuser, defender, judge, and executioner, all in one; for the worst treachery and the greatest crimes against love are secret; they are committed soul against soul without witnesses, and, moreover, it is the interest of the poor murdered ones to hold their tongue. Consequently, love has its own code, its own vengeance, with which the world has nothing to do. Now I am resolved never to forgive a crime; and there is no such thing as a peccadillo in things of the heart. Yesterday you chose to behave like a man who was sure of being

loved. It is true you would be wrong not to *feel* that, but you would be criminal in my eyes if it took away from you the ingenuous charm that the fluctuations of hope once gave you. I do not want to see you either timid or too self-confident; neither do I want you to fear the loss of my affection, which would be an insult to me; but I do not like the secure and airy mannner in which you are beginning to carry your love. You ought not to feel more free than I am myself. If you do not know the torture that a single thought can inflict upon the heart, tremble lest I teach it to you. With a single glance I gave my soul to you, and you read it. To you were given then the purest feelings that ever rose in the heart of a young girl. The reflections, the meditations, of which I have spoken to you came only from the head; but when the heart is wounded and asks counsel of the mind, believe me, a young girl has the prescience of an angel who knows, and can do, all.

I declare to you, Felipe, that, even if you love me as I believe you do, were you to let me suspect the least relaxation in the feelings of respect, obedience, and submission which you promised me, if I perceived any diminution in that first and beautiful love which came from your soul to mine, I should say nothing, I should not torment you with letters more or less dignified, more or less proud and angry, or merely scolding letters like this one, — no, I should say nothing, Felipe.

You would see me sad, sad unto death; but I should not die without inflicting on you the saddest of all blights; without dishonoring the memory of her whom you have loved; without planting in your heart eternal regrets, for you would see me lost here below in the eyes of men, and forever lost in the other world.

Therefore, do not make me jealous of the happy Louise, the Louise sacredly loved, the Louise whose soul expanded in a cloudless love; who possessed, in Dante's sublime language: "Senza brama, sicura ricchezza."

You put into my heart last night the cold and cruel blade of doubt. Do you understand what I mean? I distrusted you, and I have suffered so much that I long to doubt no more. If you find my service too hard, leave it; I shall not be angry.

Do I not know you are a man of intellect and wit? Reserve those flowers of your soul for me; turn a dull eye to the world, and do not put yourself in the way of receiving flattery, praises, compliments from any one. Come to me rejected and disliked, the object of calumny or contempt, tell me that women cannot comprehend you, that they ignore you, that none of them can love you; then shall you learn what there is for you in the heart and love of your Louise.

The treasures of our love must be so buried that the whole world may trample over them and not suspect them. If you had been handsome I might never have given you a thought, and sure I am I should never have

discovered in you the world of reasons that has made love blossom. Those reasons! we cannot know them, any more than we know why the sun calls forth the blossom or matures the fruit; and yet there is one that I do know, and it charms me — your noble face has its character, its language, its *countenance* for me alone!

Yes, I alone have the power of transforming you and of making you the most adorable of all men; and I will not have your mind escape my possession; it is not to be revealed to others, any more than your eyes, your charming mouth, your features, speak to them. To me alone the right to illumine the fires of your intellect. Remain to others the gloomy, cold, disdainful grandee of Spain you have always been. You were a savage land among whose ruins no one ventured; you were contemplated from afar; and behold, now you are making commonplace highways for all the world to enter; you will soon become an amiable Parisian!

Have you forgotten my programme? Yesterday your evident joy boasted openly that you loved me. It required the glance I gave you last night to prevent you from letting the keenest, wittiest, most satirical salon in Paris know that I inspired you. I think you too noble to have a policy in your love, but if you cannot continue to have with me the simplicity of a child I shall pity you; and yet, in spite of this first mistake you are still an object of the profound admiration of

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

XXIII.

FELIPE TO LOUISE.

When God sees our faults he sees also our repentance. You are right, my dear mistress. I felt that I had displeased you without being able to fathom the cause of your displeasure. You have now explained it and given me fresh cause to adore you. Your jealousy, like that of the God of Israel, fills me with happiness. Nothing is more sacred than jealousy. Oh, my beautiful guardian angel, jealousy is a sentinel that never sleeps; it is to love what physical pain is to man, a warning. Be jealous of your servant, Louise; the more you strike, the more he will kiss the rod which tells him in striking how much you care for him.

Yes, I did attempt last night to show you what I was before I loved you. People used to say in Madrid that my conversation gave them pleasure, and I wanted you to see for yourself that I had some value. Was that vanity? If so, it is well punished. Your last look left me in a state of trembling agitation I had never before experienced, — not even when the French forces appeared before Cadiz and my life was nearly sacrificed to the hypocrisy of the king.

I sought in vain for the cause of your displeasure; I was well-nigh in despair at this sudden and jarring want of harmony between our souls when I believed I was acting by your will, thinking with your thought, seeing with your eyes, enjoying your pleasure and feeling your pain, as I feel heat and cold. "Displease her!" I repeated like one beside himself. My noble and beautiful Louise, if anything could increase my devotion to you and my inalterable belief in your saintly spirit it would be the doctrine you have now put into my heart like a new light.

If these are your punishments what will be your rewards? Your mere acceptance of me as a servant was beyond my hopes. Since then I have derived from you an unhoped-for life; I am vowed to a worship; my breath is not useless; my strength has a purpose — were it only that of suffering for you. I have told you, and I here repeat it, that you will always find me what I was when I offered you the duty of an humble, unassuming servant. Yes, were you even lost or dishonored, my tenderness would increase, my hand would stanch your wounds, my prayers would carry to God the assurance that you were not guilty. Have I not told you that the sentiments I bear for you in my heart are those of a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, — that I am, before all things, a family for you? I am all, or nothing — as you will.

But surely you will pardon me if sometimes I am more a lover than a father or a brother; though the father and the brother is ever behind the lover. If you could look into my heart when I see you so beautiful and radiant, so calm and so admired in your carriage on the Champs-Élysées or in your box at the opera! If you only knew how little personal pride I feel when I hear the praises drawn forth by your beauty, your bearing, and how I love the unknown persons who utter them! When by chance you have cast a flower into my soul by bowing to me, I am both humble and proud; I walk away as though God had blessed me; I return home joyous, and my joy leaves in my being a long and luminous trace; it shines in the smoke of my cigar; and I know, better than ever, that the blood which is boiling in my veins is all yours.

Do you not know how you are loved? After seeing you, I return into my study, which glows with Saracenic magnificence, but where your portrait eclipses all. I touch the spring that makes it invisible to all eyes but mine; I cast myself into the infinite of contemplation; poems of happiness come into my mind; from the heaven in which I am I see the course of my coming life, such as I never dared to hope it. Have you sometimes heard in the silence of the night, or amid the noise of your gay society, a voice resounding softly in your dear, adorable little ear? Know you not the many prayers my heart addresses to you?

So long, so often have I looked at you in silent contemplation that I have ended by discovering the reason of all your features; I see their correspondence with the perfections of your soul. That harmony of your two natures, I have put into sonnets — which you do not know because my written poesy is so far below its subject that I dare not send them to you. My heart is so absolutely absorbed in yours, that I am never a moment without thinking of you, and if you ceased to inspire my life all would be suffering within me.

Can you now understand, Louise, what suffering it was for me to feel that I had given you, involuntarily, some cause for displeasure and yet be unable to divine what it was! That beautiful dual life suddenly arrested! my heart seemed turned to ice. In the utter impossibility of explaining this discord I believed you had ceased to love me; I resolved then — sadly, and at the same time, happily — to return to my condition of servitude; but your letter was brought to me, and has filled me with joy. Oh, blame me, scold me thus forever!

Forgive me, Louise; I have not changed; I give you the key of my nature with the submission of a child. I shall never make another mistake, another false step.

Louise, endeavor that the chain that binds me to you, and which you hold in your hand, be kept so taut that the slightest movement you make may henceforth tell your every wish to him who is

Your servant, FELIPE.

XXIV.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

October, 1824.

My dear friend, — You who have been married for months to a poor sick soul whose mother you are making yourself, you can have no idea of the frightful agitations and perplexities of the drama played in the depths of some hearts under the name of Love, — a drama which an instant can turn into tragedy, where death is in a look, in an answer heedlessly uttered.

You told me to test Felipe, and I have done so, reserving for the last a great but decisive trial. I wanted to know if I was loved *quand même* — the grand saying of royalists, why not of Catholics? I walked with him nearly one whole night under the lindens in the garden, and there remained not a shadow of doubt. I was to him as deeply loved, as grand, as pure, as I had ever been; he took not the slightest advantage of the favor I had granted him. Oh! he is a true Spaniard, a true Abencerrage! He climbed my wall to merely kiss my hand, which I held out to him in the darkness from my balcony; he came near breaking his neck, but that's nothing; a great many young men would have done the same, and Christians used to endure great martyrdoms to get to heaven.

Two days ago I took the future diplomat, my very honored father aside, and said to him laughing: —

"Monsieur, it is whispered about among our friends that you intend to marry your dear Armande to the nephew of a certain ambassador, under promise of vast settlements in the marriage contract. Your daughter weeps, but she is forced to yield to the inexorable power of paternal authority. Some of these gossips say your daughter hides beneath her tears a selfish and ambitious soul. We are going to the Opera to-night, to the box of the gentlemen of the Bedchamber, and Monsieur le Baron de Macumer will be there — "

"Oh! oh!" said my father, laughing.

"You are not attending to my tale," I said, with a disdainful and sarcastic glance. "Listen; if you see me unglove my right hand please to deny this impertinent rumor, and show yourself displeased by it."

"I see I may feel quite easy about your future. You have no more the head of a girl than Jeanne d'Arc had the heart of a woman. You 'll be happy; for you will love no one, and let others love you."

On that, I burst out laughing.

"What are you laughing at, my little coquette?" he said.

"Armande laughs at everything," said my mother; "even at rheumatism, for she is not afraid of the night air."

"It is fully time she were married," said my father, "and I hope it can be done before I start for Spain."

"Yes, if you wish it," I replied simply.

Two hours later, my mother and I, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and Madame d'Espard were sitting like four roses in the front of the box. I sat a little sideways, with one shoulder only to the audience, so that I could see all without being much seen in that roomy box, which occupies a space between two columns opposite to the stage.

Macumer came; he planted himself close by, put his opera-glass to his eyes, and gazed at me at his ease. At the first interlude a young man, whom I call the king of knaves, came in, — a youth of feminine beauty, Comte Henri de Marsay. He produced himself with a sarcasm in his eyes, a smile on his lips, and a generally joyous air on his face. He paid his respects first to my mother and to Madame d'Espard, Madame de Maufrigneuse, the Comte d'Esgrignon, and Monsieur de Canalis; then he turned to me and said: —

"I don't know if I am the first to congratulate you on an event which renders you an object of much envy."

"Ah! a marriage?" I said. "Do you need a girl just from a convent to tell you that marriages which are talked about are never made?"

Monsieur de Marsay stooped over and said something

in Macumer's ear, and I perfectly understood from his glance and the motion of his lips that he was saying: "Baron, perhaps you are in love with that little coquette, who is only making use of you; but there is now a marriage in prospect; it is best to know what is going on."

Macumer gave the gossiping meddler a glance which, in my opinion, was a poem, and made him some such answer as this: —

"I am not in love with any little coquette."

And he said it with a look which sent me into such raptures that I glanced at my father and took off my glove. Felipe evidently had not the slightest doubt of me, not one suspicion. He has fully realized all that I expect of his noble character; he has faith in me, in me only, and the world and its falsehoods cannot touch him. Not an eyelid winked; the blue blood of my Abencerrage did not even tint his olive skin.

The count left the box, and then I said to Macumer:

"Monsieur de Marsay made an epigram on me?"

"More than an epigram, an epithalamium," he replied.

"That is Greek to me," I answered laughing, and rewarding him by a look which always puts him out of countenance.

"I don't wonder!" exclaimed my father, addressing Madame de Maufrigneuse. "These gossiping rumors

are infamous. As soon as a girl goes into society there 's a rage to marry her; people invent the greatest absurdities. I shall not marry Armande against her wishes. Now I must make a turn round the *foyer* and deny the rumor, or they will say next that I let it go uncontradicted so as to put the idea into the ambassador's head. Cæsar's daughter should be no more suspected than Cæsar's wife."

The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame d'Espard looked first at my mother and then at my father in their sparkling, shrewd, and lively way which asked a thousand silent questions. Those clever creatures saw at once there was something beneath the surface. Of all secret things love is the most public; women exhale it, I do believe! In fact, the woman who hides it is a sort of anomaly. Our eyes tell more than our tongues.

Well, after enjoying the delight of finding Felipe as grandly loyal as I wished him to be, I naturally wanted something more. So I made the signal agreed upon to bring him to my window by that dangerous way I told you of. A few hours later I found him, stiff as a statue, glued to the wall, his hand clasping the railing of the balcony, watching for the lights in my room.

"My dear Felipe," I said, "you were very nice to-night; you behaved just as I should have behaved myself if any one had told me you were going to be married."

"I felt sure you would have told me yourself, and not have left me to hear it from others," he replied.

"What right had you to the information?"

"That of a faithful servant."

"Are you really one?"

"Yes," he replied, "and I shall never change."

The soft light of the moon seemed suddenly brightened by the glance he cast first at me, and then at the abyss between the wall and the balcony. He seemed to be asking if we could n't plunge there together and die. Then the lightning passed out of his eyes, repressed by the force of passion.

"An Arab has but one word," he said in a choking voice. "I am your servant; I belong to you; I will live my whole life for you."

The hand that clasped the railing seemed to tremble. I laid mine on it and said: —

"Felipe, my friend, by my own will I am your wife from henceforth. Come to-morrow morning and ask me of my father. He wants to keep my fortune; you must promise me to acknowledge in the marriage contract that you have received it, and then, I feel sure, my father will accept you. Now go; I am no longer Armande de Chaulieu, I am Louise de Macumer, and I will commit no more imprudences."

He turned pale; I was really afraid his legs might give way under him. However, he jumped those ten

feet without doing himself any harm. Then, after causing me all that horrible agitation, he kissed his hand, and disappeared.

"Yes, I am loved," I said to myself, — "loved as never woman yet was loved."

I went to sleep with absolutely infantine content; my fate is forever settled.

About two o'clock the next day my father sent for me. I found him in his study with the duchess and Macumer. The proper speeches were most graciously exchanged. I simply answered that if Monsieur Henarez had come to an agreement with my father I had no reason to oppose their wishes. Thereupon, my mother invited the baron to dinner; after which, we all four took a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. I looked satirically at Monsieur de Marsay as he rode by on horseback, for his sharp eye at once saw Macumer and my father on the front seat of the calèche.

My adorable Felipe has had some new cards printed. See: —

HENAPEZ

(OF THE DUCS DE SORIA),

BARON DE MACUMER.

Every morning he brings me himself a bouquet of delicious hot-house flowers; in the midst of which I always find a letter containing a sonnet in Spanish to my perfections, made by him during the night.

I send you, as a specimen, the first and last of these sonnets, translated by me word for word and line for line, but without the rhymes.

First Sonnet.

Wearing a silken vest, I more than once,
With sword uplifted, heart in calm repose,
Stood forth to meet the wild bull's mad advance,
And seize its horns, sharper than Dian's crescent.
Singing an Andalusian seguidilla,
I stormed a breach beneath a rain of fire;
I staked my life upon that game of chance,
As unconcerned as though it were base lucre;
I could have faced the cannon at their mouths.
But now — now I am timid as a hare,
Or child that sees a spectre in its dreams;
For when thy soft eyes rest upon my face,
An icy sweat breaks forth, my knees give way,
I tremble, I shrink back, my courage gone.

Last Sonnet.

Last night I longed to sleep to dream of thee,
But jealous slumber fled mine eyelids;
Then, looking forth upon the silent night,
Thinking of thee, mine eyes turned heavenward.
Phenomenal sight! which love alone explaineth, —
The firmament had lost its sapphire tints;
The stars, like diamonds dulled and vitrified,
Cast murky gleams and cold reflections;
The moon, her silvery mantle fallen from her,

Rolled sadly downward to the dim horizon.
Ah! thou hast robbed the heavens of all their splendor;
The whiteness of the moon is on thy brow,
The blueness of the sky is in thine eyes,
And the stars, too! — yes, thou hast robbed the heavens.

Could he prove to a girl more enchantingly that he is always thinking of her? What do you say to a love which expresses itself in a rich prodigality of flowers,— flowers of the mind and flowers of the earth? For the last ten days I 've learned to know Spanish gallantry, — the famous gallantry of the olden time.

Ah! dearest, what is happening at La Crampade, where I walk in imagination watching the progress of our agriculture. Have you nothing to tell me of our mulberry trees, of our last winter's plantations? Does all succeed as you expected and hoped? Have the wifely flowers blossomed in your heart as well as those in the borders? Does Louis continue his madrigals? How do you get on together? How does the gentle purling of your brook of conjugal tenderness compare with the dashing torrent of my love? Don't be vexed, my dear pretty philosopher in petticoats. If you are, I 'll send Felipe in person to kneel at your feet and bring me either your head or your pardon. My life here is so perfect, dear love, that I long to know about yours in Provence. Besides, I want your congratulations on the accession to our family of a Spaniard who is exactly the color of an Havana cigar.

But, seriously, Renée, I am uneasy; I am afraid you are hiding troubles from me lest you might sadden my joy—oh, naughty girl! Write me at once a good long letter, all about your life and its least little matters. All you ever write makes me thoughtful. Often when I am at the Opera watching the ballet-dancers pirouetting, I am saying to myself; "It is half past nine o'clock, perhaps she is going to bed; I wonder what she is thinking; is she happy? does the "freedom of will" still last, or has it gone the way of wills we no longer care for? A thousand kisses.

XXV.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

October.

IMPERTINENT girl! why should I write to you? What is there to say? While you are living that life of fêtes and operas, diversified by the agonies, the quarrels, and the flowers of love (which you describe and I share as if it were a drama played before me) I am living my humdrum life, monotonous and regular as that of a convent. We are always in bed by nine o'clock, and up at dawn. Our meals are served with exasperating punctuality. Not the slightest "eventful circumstance" ever happens.

I have accustomed myself to all this without much difficulty. It may be the natural way of human existence; what would life be if not subjected to fixed rules which the astronomers say (and so does Louis) regulate the universe. Order is never wearying. Besides, I have imposed upon myself obligations as to my toilet, which take the morning hours between the time I rise and breakfast. I am determined always to look charming; it is a duty of womanhood; I like it myself, and it gives great delight to the old man and Louis.

After breakfast we usually take a walk. When the newspapers arrive I disappear, to attend to my household affairs, or to sit down and read, for I read a great deal, or to write to you. I return about an hour before dinner. After dinner we play cards, receive visits or make them. Thus I pass my days between a happy old man who has done with the desires of life, and a young one whose only happiness I am. Louis is so content, so satisfied, that his joy has ended by comforting my soul. Happiness for us is doubtless not in passionate emotions.

Sometimes, in the evenings, when I am not wanted to make up a rubber, I bury myself in my easy-chair and let my thoughts take wing to you. I enter into you; I am part of your beautiful, fruitful life, so varied, so violently agitated, and I ask myself to what your turbulent preface is leading; will it kill the book? You

may have the illusions of love, dear darling, but I — I have nothing now but the realities of household life. Yes, your loves seem like a dream to me! I find some difficulty in understanding why you seek to make them so romantic. You demand a man with more soul than senses, more grandeur and virtue than love; you expect that a girl's dream on entering life should become reality, you ask for sacrifices in order to reward them; you subject your Felipe to tests, not to learn his character, but to know if his submission, worship, and desire will be durable. But, my child, behind these fanciful decorations stands an altar at which an indissoluble, eternal tie is bound. The morrow of marriage, that terrible fact which changes the young girl into a woman, the lover into a husband, may overthrow all the fine scaffoldings of your subtlest precautions. Louise, all wedded pairs, whether they are ardent lovers, or whether they are two persons married as Louis and I were, have to seek in marriage what Rabelais has called a great *perhaps*.

I don't blame you, though it was rather giddy, for talking with Don Felipe in the garden, or for questioning him from your balcony, he being on the wall; but what troubles me, my child, is that you are trifling with life, and I am terribly afraid that life may trifle with you. I dare not offer you all the advice that my experience suggests to me for your happiness;

but let me tell you once more, from the depths of my valley, that the viaticum of marriage is in two words, — resignation, and devotion. After all, I see that in spite of your tests and your coquetries and your sage observations, you will marry exactly as I did. The higher the desires, the deeper the precipitation, that 's all.

Oh ! how I should like to see the Baron de Macumer and talk with him for a few hours, — so anxious am I for your happiness.

XXVI.

THE BARONNE DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

March, 1825.

Felipe having agreed, with the generosity of a Saracen, to the wishes of my father and mother, by acknowledging the receipt of my fortune without receiving it, the duchess has become even better to me than she was before. She calls me her *sly puss* and her *clever girl ;* she thinks me very *knowing.*

" But, dear mamma," I said to her the evening before the signing of the contract, " you attribute to policy and shrewdness and cleverness the results of love, — the truest, most single-minded, disinterested,

honest love that ever was. Do believe that I am not the clever girl you do me the honor to think me."

"Nonsense, Armande," she said, drawing me to her by my neck and kissing my forehead, "you did not want to return to the convent, or to remain unmarried, and yet, like the true Chaulieu that you are, you felt the necessity of restoring your father's family." (If you only knew, Renée, how flattering that was to the duke, who was listening to us.) "I have watched you all winter, running your little nose into everything, judging men very accurately, and divining the truth about social life in France. You have had the wit to pick out the only Spaniard capable of giving you the satisfactory life of a woman who is mistress in her own home. My dear child, you have treated him as Tullia treats your brother."

"What a school my sister's convent has been, to be sure!" remarked my father.

I gave him a look which stopped the words on his lips; then I turned to the duchess and said: —

"Mamma, I love my suitor, Felipe de Soria, with all the powers of my soul. Though this love was involuntary, it was strongly resisted when it rose in my heart, and I swear that I did not yield to it until I saw in the Baron de Macumer a soul worthy of mine, — a heart whose delicacy, generosity, devotion, strength, and sensibility fulfilled the requirements of my heart — "

"But, my dear," she said, interrupting me, "he is as ugly as —"

"As anything you please," I said quickly; "but I love that ugliness."

"Armande," said my father, "if you love him, have the strength of mind to master your love; do not risk your happiness. Happiness, my dear, depends a great deal on the first days of marriage."

"Leave us now, monsieur," said the duchess; "I have some advice to give my daughter."

When we were alone she continued as follows: —

"You are to be married in three days, my dear child, and therefore I ought to give you, without any bourgeois sentimentality, the serious advice which mothers of our station give their daughters. You marry a man you love, therefore, I need not pity you. Neither do I pity myself; I have only known you for a year, and though that has been long enough to make me love you, it is not long enough to make me weep at losing your company. Your intelligence is greater even than your beauty; you have gratified my self-love as a mother; and you have behaved like a good and amiable daughter. For that reason, you will always find me an excellent mother. You smile? Alas! when mother and daughter have lived much together as women, they are apt to quarrel in after life. I desire to see you happy. Therefore listen to me. The love

you now feel is a girl's love, the natural love of all women who are born to attach themselves to men. But alas! my child, there is but one man in the world for each of us; there are not two men; and he whom we are formed to treasure is often not the one we have chosen for a husband believing that we loved him. However strange these words may seem to you, meditate upon them. If we do not love the man we have chosen, the fault is both in us and in him; sometimes also in circumstances which depend on neither. Nevertheless, there is nothing to prevent the man whom our family has chosen for us, or we have chosen for ourselves, from being the one beloved man of our life. The barrier which after marriage may be felt between us is often raised by a want of perseverance both on his part and our own. To make a husband a lover is quite as delicate a piece of work as to make our lover a husband, — you have just accomplished the latter feat in an admirable manner. Well, I say again, I am very desirous of seeing you happy. Remember, from this instant, that the first three months of wedded life will make you an unhappy woman unless you submit yourself in marriage with the obedience, tenderness, and intelligence you have shown in love. For, my little girl, you have carried on your innocent affairs with all the zest of clandestine love. If your new life of happy love brings disenchantment, possibly sufferings, come

and see me and let me know of them. Do not expect too much of marriage; it will in any case bring you as much pain as joy. Married happiness requires as much culture as love. If, by some mischance, you lose the lover in your husband, remember you may find him again under another form, that of the father of your children. There, my dear child, is the whole of social life. Sacrifice all to the man whose name you bear, whose honor and worldly consideration cannot receive the slightest smirch without inflicting a lasting injury on you. To sacrifice all to a husband is not only an absolute duty to women of our rank, it is also the wisest policy. The finest attribute of all the great principles of morality is to be true and profitable on whichever side they are examined. I think I have said enough on this head. One word more; I think you are inclined to jealousy; I am jealous myself; but I do not wish you to be jealous in a foolish way. Listen: Jealousy which lets itself be seen is like a player who lays his cards upon the table. To show your jealousy is to show your hand; is it not? You cannot then guess the game on the other side. In all things, we must learn to suffer in silence. I shall have a serious conversation with Macumer about you the evening before your marriage."

I took my mother's beautiful arm, and kissed her hand, leaving a tear upon it. I saw in that moral lesson,

worthy of her and of me, the deepest wisdom, a solicitude free from social bigotry, and, above all, a true esteem for my character. In these simple words she had summed up all the lessons that her life and her experience had sold to her, probably at heavy cost. She was touched, and said as she looked at me: —

"Dear little daughter! you are about to make a terrible passage; and most women, after they have made it, would fain do like the Earl of Westmoreland."

We laughed. To explain the joke, I must tell you that at dinner the previous evening a Russian princess had told an anecdote of how the Earl of Westmoreland, having suffered dreadfully from sea-sickness on his passage across the Channel, and wishing to go to Italy, turned back when he heard of the passage of the Alps. "One passage is enough for me," he said.

And so, Renée, your gloomy philosophy and my mother's warnings began to frighten me. The nearer marriage came, the more I gathered up my strength and will and emotions to face the alarming change from girlhood to womanhood. All our conversations returned to my mind; I reread your letters, and I discovered a secret sadness in them. These fears served to make me a conventionally pale and shrinking bride; so I was thought very charming and interesting the day the contract was signed. This morning, at the mayor's office (we went there quietly without ceremony), no one

was present but the witnesses. I am finishing this letter while they are dressing me for dinner.

We are to be married this evening, at midnight, in the church of Sainte-Valère, after a brilliant reception. I must own my fears make me look like a victim, and give me a false air of modesty, which has won me an admiration I don't understand. I am delighted to see that my poor Felipe is as timid and girlish as I; the company distress him ; he is like a bat in a glass shop.

"Happily this day has a morrow," he whispered in my ear. Poor fellow, he would fain he married without any one looking on ; he is so shy and timid.

When the Sardinian ambassador came to the signing of the contract, be took me aside and presented a pearl necklace clasped by six magnificent diamonds. It was a gift from my sister-in-law the Duchesse de Soria. This necklace was accompanied by a sapphire bracelet, inside of which were engraved the words "I love thee before I know thee." Two charming letters were with these gifts, which I would not accept until I had asked Felipe's permission.

"For," I said to him, "I should not like you to accept anything that was not from me."

He kissed my hand, much moved, and said : —

"Wear them for the sake of that motto ; the love thus offered is sincere."

Saturday night.

Here, my Renée are the last words of your girl friend. After the midnight mass we leave for an estate which Felipe, with delicate thoughtfulness, has bought in Nivernais on the road to Provence. My name is already Louise de Macumer; but by whatever name all others call me, for you there is no one but Louise.

XXVII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

September, 1825.

I HAVE not written to you, dearest, since the day of my marriage at the mayor's office, nearly eight months ago! As for you, not a line! That is shameful, madame.

Well, we started with post-horses for the château de Chantepleurs, the estate Felipe bought in Nivernais on the banks of the Loire, whither all our servants except my maid had preceded us, and where we ourselves arrived with extraordinary rapidity the following evening.

Since then, my dearest, all these months have elapsed and I have not written to you, but I am certain that you know why. Renée, I understand you now. It is

not to her nearest friend, nor to her mother, perhaps not even to herself that a happy bride can speak of her happy marriage. We must leave that memory in our souls as an emotion that belongs to ourselves alone, and for which there is no name. Ah! how can they call *duty* the tender follies of the heart, and the irresistible impulses of love. What horrible law has converted into "wifely duty," the thousand delicacies of taste, of sentiment, of chastity in a woman? Can it be a duty to give these flowers of the soul, these roses of life, these poems of lofty sensibility to a being we do not love? Rights, duties, in such emotions! why, they bud and blossom to the sun of love, or else their seeds must mildew in the chilly atmosphere of repugnance or aversion. No, love maintains its own prerogative.

Ah, my glorious Renée, I know you now in all your greatness. I bow the knee to you; I am amazed at your clear-sightedness. Yes, the woman who does not make, as I have made, a marriage of love, must fling herself into maternity, as a soul whom earth has disappointed flings itself into religion. From all that you have written me there issues one stern truth: none but a really great man can truly love a woman. I now know why. Man obeys two principles. In him are desire and sentiment. Inferior men mistake desire for sentiment; whereas superior men cover desire with the greater power of sentiment; sentiment communicates

reserve, and inspires them with reverence for woman. Sensibility, delicacy of feeling, is in proportion to the strength of the inward being, the soul; and the man of genius is the only man who can approach us on our own ground; he conceives, divines, and comprehends a woman; he lifts her on the wings of his desire restrained by sentiment. When mind and heart and senses all combine to bear us onward, it is not to earth we fall; we rise to higher regions, — unhappily, we do not always stay there.

Such, my dear soul, is the philosophy of *my* first months of marriage. Felipe is an angel. I can think aloud to him. It is not a figure of speech to say he is another myself. His grandeur is not to be expressed. He is more closely bound to me now that I am his; he finds in happiness fresh cause for love. I am to him the nobler part of himself. I see the future; years of marriage, far from changing his delights, will increase his confidence, develop new sensibilities between us, and strengthen our union.

What blissful rapture! My soul is so made that happiness sends vivid gleams throughout me; they warm me, they illuminate my whole inward being. The sun which gilds the summits when he sets glows with equal fervor in the rosy dawn. Ah! by what fair chance has all this come to me? My mother filled my mind with fears; her forebodings — which now seem

full of jealousy though free from vulgar pettiness — are cheated by the result; for, oh! my dearest, your fears, hers, and mine have taken wings.

We stayed at Chantepleurs more than seven months, like two eloping lovers who hide their happiness from angry parents. The roses of pleasure crowned our love, and will blossom throughout our lives. By a sudden turn of mind, one morning when I was even more fully happy than ever, my thoughts went suddenly to my Renée, to her marriage of social obedience, and I divined her life, I *penetrated* it! Oh! my angel, why are we fated to speak two different languages? Your marriage, purely social, my marriage of happy love, are two worlds which can no more comprehend each other than the finite can comprehend the infinite. You are on earth; I am in heaven. You are in the human sphere, I in the divine sphere. I reign by love, you reign by reasoning and by duty. I am so high that if there came a fall I should be shivered into a million fragments. But oh! I ought to keep silence; I am ashamed to tell you, dear, the glory, riches, wealth of joy in my springtime of love.

We are now in Paris, in a charming house in the rue du Bac, arranged for us by the same architect Felipe employed to arrange Chantepleurs. I have just been listening, my soul expanding with the sacred joys of marriage, to that celestial music of Rossini I used

to hear with an uneasy soul, — tormented, though I did not know it, with the questions of love. I am thought to be handsomer than I was, and I hear myself called "madame" with absolutely childish glee.

Friday morning

Renée, my beautiful saint, happiness draws me perpetually back to you. I feel in my heart that I am better and more loving to you than I have ever been. I have so deeply studied your married life by the beginning of my own, and I see you so grand, so noble, so magnificently virtuous, that I here and now proclaim myself your inferior, your sincere admirer, as well as your friend. Knowing what my marriage has proved to be, I see now that I should die were it other than what it is. But *you live!* Ah! by what instinct, tell me that? Never again will I make the slightest jest about anything you may say to me. Jesting, my dearest, is only ignorance; we laugh at that we know nothing about. Where recruits jest, veterans look grave; so I was told by the Comte de Chaulieu, a poor cavalry captain, who has never been farther than Fontainebleau in his life.

But, my own darling, I know you have not told me all. You have hidden some wounds from me. You suffer; I feel it. I have found ideas in the little that you have told me; and I have studied them, seeking to

discover at a distance the true reasons of your conduct. "She has never reached real marriage," I thought to myself one evening. "What is happiness to me is suffering to her; and she disguises her suffering under the pompous maxims of social morality."

Ah, Renée! that which is so glorious in true marriage is this: it needs no theories, no phylacteries, no grand words; whereas to justify the cruel social laws of our slavery and vassalage, men have heaped theory upon theory and maxim upon maxim. If your self-sacrifice is noble and sublime, is my happiness, sheltered by the white and gold canopy of the Church and sealed by the law in a mayor's office, an unnatural, abnormal thing? For the honor of the laws, for you, but above all, to sanction my own happiness, I want you happy, my Renée. Oh, tell me that you have begun to feel in your heart a little love for this Louis who adores you; tell me that the solemn and symbolic torch of Hymen has not served only to make you see the darkness of your fate.

Love, my angel, is to the moral nature exactly what the sun is to the earth. I return ever to that point, the light that lights me, and which will, I fear, consume me. Dear Renée, — who used to say in your ecstasies of friendship in the convent garden, beneath the grape-vine (do you remember?), "Louise, I love thee so that if God appeared to me I would ask him to give me all

the griefs, and thee all the joys of this world. Yes, I have the passion of suffering," — well, this day, dearest, I return thy wish; I pray to God to divide my happiness with thee.

Listen: I am certain that you are ambitious under the name of Louis de l'Estorade. Well, get him appointed deputy at the coming elections; he is nearly forty years old, and as the Chamber does not assemble for six months after the elections, he will by that time be of the required age for a man in public life. You will then come to Paris; that 's all I *need say*. My father and the friends I shall now make here will appreciate you; and if your old father-in-law will entail his property, we will obtain the title of count for Louis. That 's easily done, and — we shall be together!

XXVIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

October, 1825.

My happy Louise, — You dazzle me. For several minutes I have been holding before me your letter, on which a few of my tears are shining in the setting sun, sitting here alone beneath the barren rock where I have placed a bench. In the far, far distance, like a steel blade, gleams the Mediterranean. A few sweet-scented

shrubs shadow my seat; I have planted an enormous jasmine, plenty of honeysuckle, and Spanish broom. Some day the rock will be covered with clasping and climbing things. But now it is autumn, and all this verdure is beginning to look like a faded carpet. When I am there no one comes to disturb me, for they know I want to be alone. The seat is called "Louise's Bench." Does not that suffice to tell you that I am not alone there, although alone.

If I tell you all these details, so trifling to you, if I describe the coming verdure that I hope will one day clothe my bare and frowning rock, at the top of which an accident of vegetation has already placed a grand umbrageous pine like a parasol, it is that I find in these things a mental image to which I cling.

As I sat there enjoying your happy marriage, and (why should I not confess the truth to you?) envying it with all my strength, I felt the first movements of my child, which from the depths of my being reacted on the depths of my soul. This dull sensation, — a warning, a pleasure, a pain, a promise, a reality, — this happiness which is mine only in all this world, and is a secret between me and God; this mystery tells me that the rock shall be clothed with flowers, that the joyous laughter of a family shall echo here, that my womb is blessed, and shall give life abundantly. I have long felt myself born to be a mother. Therefore the first

certainty I received of bearing another life within me has brought me blessed consolations. A mighty joy has crowned the long, long days of devotion, which in themselves were a joy to Louis. "Self-devotion!" I said to myself, "is it not more than love; is it not the highest of all ecstasy, the generative ecstacy? Art thou not, O Devotion, the cause that leads to the effect,—the mysterious, unwearying divinity hidden beneath innumerable spheres in that unknown centre through which the worlds must pass?" Devotion, alone with its secret, filled with pleasures secretly enjoyed, on which no human being can cast an eye profane, and which none can suspect; Devotion, a jealous God and a mighty, a conquering God, inexhaustible, because derived from the very essence of things, and thus ever equal to himself in spite of the strain upon his forces, — Devotion! ah, yes, there is the sign-manual of my life.

Love, Louise, is the action of Felipe upon you, but the shining of my life upon the family will produce an incessant action of that little world on me. Your beautiful gilded harvest will pass; mine, though delayed, will be more durable. It will renew itself again and again. Love is the sweetest larceny that Society ever made from Nature, but maternity, is not that Nature herself in her highest joys? My tears are dried. Love has made my Louis happy, but marriage has made me a mother and I will be happy too!

So thinking I came home to my white manor-house with its green blinds, and now I write you.

Dear, the most natural and the most surprising fact of a woman's life exists in me for the last six months. But I must tell you, in a whisper, that it has not troubled in any way either my heart or my intellect. I see them all happy about me. The future grandfather has become like a child himself; the father, on the contrary, is grave and anxious. Both are full of little cares for me; they talk to me of the happiness of being a mother. Alas! I alone feel nothing; I dare not tell you the state of absolute insensibility in which I find myself. I fib a little, so as not to sadden their joy. But I may speak honestly to you, and I must admit that so far as I have gone, maternity begins in the imagination.

Louis was as surprised as I was by my pregnancy. The child has come of itself without other call than his impatient wishes. Chance, my dear, is the god of maternity. Though such accidents are in harmony with the general desire of nature, my doctor, when I questioned him, did not deny that the children whom we so tenderly call "the children of love" are usually handsome and intelligent; and that their life is often, as it were, protected by the happiness that shone like a brilliant star on their conception. Perhaps, my own Louise, you will have in your motherhood joys that I

can never know in mine. Perhaps a woman loves the child of a man adored as you adore Felipe better than she can love the child of a husband married from duty or for the mere sake of being married.

These thoughts, kept in the depths of my heart, add to the other grave thoughts which the hope of motherhood has brought me. But, as there can be no family without a child, I long to hasten the moment when the pleasures of the Family will begin for me and be, thenceforth, my sole existence. Just now my life is all suspense and mystery. I am extremely curious to know the moment in life when motherhood begins. Surely it cannot be in the midst of those dreadful pains I begin to fear.

Adieu, my happy one! adieu, you in whom I live and fancy all those beautiful loves, those jealousies of a look, those whispers in the ear, those pleasures which wrap us, as it were, in another atmosphere, fill us with another blood, another light, another life. Ah! my treasure, I, too, know what love is. Don't weary of telling me all. Let us keep firmly to our agreement. As for me, I shall spare you nothing.

No, I will speak openly and tell you, in order to end this letter soberly, that in rereading yours an unconquerable fear has come over me. It seems to me as though your splendid love was a defiance of God. Will not the sovereign master of this world, Misfortune, be

angry at having no part in your festival? Was there ever a glorious happiness that he did not overthrow it? Ah! Louise, do not forget in the midst of your great good fortune to pray to God. Do good, be charitable and kind; exorcise adversity by humbleness. I am more pious now, since my marriage, than I was in the convent. You never speak to me of religion. In adoring Felipe you seem to reverse the proverb, and to care more for the saint than for God. But perhaps my fears come only from the excess of my love. You go together to church and do good in secret, don't you?

I am afraid you will think me very provincial in thus ending my letter; but remember, dear, that my fears are prompted by friendship, — friendship such as La Fontaine made it, uneasy and alarmed by a dream, a thought that is still all misty. You deserve to be happy, for you think of me in your happiness. And I think of you, dear, in my monotonous existence, which is a little gray, but full, full! sober, but productive!

And so, God bless you!

XXIX.

MONSIEUR DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

January, 1826.

MADAME, — My wife is anxious that you shall not learn through the common means of a *billet de faire part*

of an event which has given us great happiness. She has just given birth to a fine boy, whose christening we shall delay until your return to Chantepleurs. Renée and I hope you will then push on to La Crampade and be the godmother of our first-born. In this hope I have just inscribed the boy on the civil register as Armand-Louis de l'Estorade. Our dear Renée suffered much, with angelic patience. You know her, — she was supported, under this first trial of her vocation as mother, by a sense of the happiness she was giving to us.

Without committing myself to the rather ridiculous exaggerations of fathers who are fathers for the first time, I believe I may assure you that our little Armand is very handsome; you will easily believe it when I tell you that he has Renée's features and Renée's eyes. That shows that he is clever already.

Now that the doctor and the *accoucheur* assure us that Renée is out of all danger, that the child sucks well and the milk is abundant, — for nature is so rich and sound in her! — my father and I are free to give way to our great joy. Madame, that joy is so great, so full, it has so changed the whole existence of my wife and brought such brightness to the household, that I cannot but wish the same happiness for you. Renée has prepared an apartment for you, which we should like to make more worthy of our guests, but where you will, at

any rate, be received with fraternal cordiality, if not with splendor.

Renée has told me, madame, of your kind intentions toward us, and I take this occasion, as being particularly felicitious, to thank you for them. The birth of my son has determined my father to make sacrifices to which old men cannot always bring themselves. He has lately bought two estates. La Crampade brings in about thirty thousand francs a year. My father will petition the king to allow him to entail it; and if you will obtain for him, and not for me, the title you mention in your last letter you will be serving the interests of your godson.

As for me, I shall take your advice and enter the Chamber, partly for the purpose of bringing you and Renée together during the sessions. But nothing will give me more courage than to feel that you will be the protectress of my little Armand. Let us know that you will come, you so gracious and beautiful, so noble and brilliant, and play your part of fairy godmother to our eldest son. You will thus enable me to add eternal gratitude to the feelings of respectful affection with which I have the honor to be

Your very humble and very obedient servant,

Louis de l'Estorade.

XXX.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

January, 1826.

Macumer waked me just now to give me your husband's letter, my angel. I begin by saying *yes*. We shall go to Chantepleurs in April. It will be to me pleasure upon pleasure to go on to La Crampade, to see you, and to be godmother to your first child. But Macumer must be the godfather. A Catholic alliance with another sponsor would be odious to me. Ah! if you could have seen the expression of his face when I told him that, you would understand how that angel loves me.

"I am all the more anxious that you should go with me to La Crampade, Felipe," I said, "because we might, possibly, have a child there. I, too, I want to be a mother, — though, to be sure, I should be terribly torn between a child and you. In the first place if I saw you liking any living creature, even my son, better than me I don't know what would happen; Medea may have been right, after all; there 's a world of good sense in the ancients!"

He began to laugh. So, my treasure, you have the fruit without the flowers, and I have the flowers without the fruit. The contrast of our fates continues. We

are philosophers enough to seek, and to find, some day, the meaning and the moral of it. Bah! I have only been married ten months; there 's not much time lost; I can't make fate out of that!

We are leading the dissipated and yet full and abounding life of happy people. The days seem only too short. Society, which now sees me in the guise of wife and woman, thinks the Baronne de Macumer much handsomer than Louise de Chaulieu; happy love has its paints and patches. When, on a bright, sunshiny day, with the hoar frost hanging to the trees of the Champs-Élysées in white and starry garlands, we drive, Felipe and I, in our coupé before all Paris, united there where, only a year ago, we were so far asunder, many thoughts flock into my mind, and I fear to become too insolent in my happiness, — as you warned me I should, Renée, in your last letter.

If I am to know nothing of the joys of motherhood, you will tell them to me; and I shall be a mother through you; but in my opinion there can be nothing comparable to the delights of love. You will think me eccentric, fantastic, but a dozen times in the last ten months I have wished to die before I was thirty, in all the splendor of life, among the roses of love, in the bosom of joys; to go away satisfied, without disappointment, having lived in the sunshine, breathed the free ether, lost nothing of my crown, — not a leaflet,

— and kept my illusions, dying partly for love's sake. For think what it would be to live on with a young heart in an old body; to meet cold looks and unresponsive faces in a world where all men, even the most indifferent, smiled upon me; to be in short, a middle-aged woman! Why, it is hell forestalled!

We have had, Felipe and I, our first quarrel on this very subject. I said I wished him to have strength of mind enough to kill me as I slept, without my knowing it, so that I might go from one dream to another. The monster would not hear of it. I threatened to leave him alone in life, and the poor fellow turned pale. The great constitutional minister, my dear, is a baby in my hands. It is incredible what youth and simplicity he hides under his Spanish gravity. Now that I think aloud with him as I do with you, and have put him on this footing of absolute confidence, we are constantly amazing one another.

My dear, the two lovers, Felipe and Louise, wish to send a present to the new mother. It must be something that pleases her. Now tell me frankly what you would like, for we hate the vulgar fashion of "surprises." We want to remind you of ourselves by some pleasant souvenir, — something that you will use every day, and something, too, that will not get worn out by use. Our gayest, happiest meal, for then we are always alone together, is breakfast. I have a fancy

therefore to send you a breakfast service, the designs on which shall all be *children*. If you approve, answer immediately; for if I am to bring it to you, it must be ordered at once; the artists of Paris are like the sluggard kings. This is to be my offering to Lucina.

Adieu, dear wet-nurse; I wish you all the motherly joys, and I await with impatience the first letter in which you will tell me everything. That mention of an *accoucheur* in your husband's letter made me shudder. Poor Renée! a child costs dear, does n't it? I will tell my godchild some day how much he ought to love you.

A thousand kisses, my angel.

XXXI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

It is nearly five months since my confinement, and in all that time, my dear soul, I have not had one little moment in which to write to you. When you are a mother you will excuse me more than you do now, — for I see you mean to punish me by writing seldom. Do write to me, darling. Tell me your pleasures, paint me your joys with those grand tints of yours; splash in the ultramarine and don't be afraid to pain

me, for I am happy now, — happier than you can ever imagine.

I went to be churched in great state; which is always the way in the old families of Provence. The two grandfathers, Louis's father and mine, each gave me an arm. Ah! never did I kneel before God in such a transport of gratitude. I have so many things to say to you, so many feelings to describe to you, that I don't know where to begin; but, from the innermost centre of it all rises one radiant thought, — that of my prayer in church!

When, in that sacred place, where so often I had doubted life and the future, I found myself transformed into a joyful mother, I thought I saw the Virgin of the altar, bending her head and calling me to look at the Divine Infant, who seemed to smile upon me. With what holy effusion of celestial love I presented our little Armand for the Church's benediction; the rector privately baptized him while awaiting the grand ceremony. But you will see us together, Armand and me!

My child — why, here am I calling you my child! but that 's because it is the sweetest word that comes to the heart and mind and lips of a mother. So, dear child, to give you all the history of my new life, I dragged myself languidly about the gardens the last two months, wearied, worn out with the oppression of a burden I did not think could be so dear and sweet,

in spite of its discomforts. I felt such terrible apprehensions, I had such deadly forebodings that hope was not my strongest feeling. I used to reason with myself and try to think that nothing Nature wills ought to be feared; I vowed to myself that I *would* live to be a mother. Alas! for all this, I felt nothing in my heart of motherhood, even though I thought incessantly of the child that stirred within me; and even that — I mean those movements of an unknown life, which may be pleasant when we have already had children — causes more surprise than pleasure the first time. I speak to you frankly of myself, who am neither false nor affected, and whose fruition is more the gift of God, than of love. But a truce to those past sadnesses, which will never come back, I believe.

When the crisis came I had gathered within me the elements of such resistance that I bore the horrible torture marvellously, so they tell me. There was, dearest, nearly one hour during which I fell into a sort of insensibility, the effects of which were those of a dream. I felt I was two beings: one, a torn and tortured envelope; the other, a placid soul. In that fantastic state, suffering bloomed like a garland above my head; it seemed as though a rose issued from my skull and grew, and grew, and wrapped me round. The rosy color of that flower crimsoned the air. I saw red. When I thus reached the moment at which soul and

body seem to separate, a pain, which made me think of instant death, laid hold of me. I uttered dreadful cries; then I found fresh strength to suffer more. The frightful clamor of my cries was suddenly drowned in me by the delicious song of the silvery wailings of my little being. No, nothing can describe to you that moment! It seemed to me that the world was crying with my cry, that all was pain and clamor, and then that all was hushed by that weak wail of an infant.

They put me back into my great bed, which seemed to me like paradise, though I was much exhausted. Three or four joyous faces, bathed in tears, showed me the child. My dear, I was horrified!

"That little monkey!" I cried, "are you sure it is a child?"

Then I turned over on my side, wretched at not feeling more of a mother than that.

"Don't worry yourself, my dear," said my mother, who was taking care of me, "you have given birth to one of the finest children in the world. Be careful not to fret your imagination; give all your mind to becoming an animal; be the cow that feeds to get her milk."

So I went to sleep with the firm intention of letting myself go at the will of Nature.

Ah! my angel, the awakening after pain, after those misty sensations, those days when all seemed dark, laborious, doubtful, was divine! The shadows were

alive with a sensation far, far, beyond the delight of hearing my child's first cry. My heart, my soul, my being, a self unknown awoke in its shell, so gray and painful hitherto, — awoke like a flower breaking from its calyx at the call of the sun. The little monster took my breast and sucked; there, there was the *fiat lux!* Suddenly, I was a mother. Here is happiness, here is joy, joy ineffable — though it may not be without some pains.

Oh! my Louise, how you, too, will appreciate, when it comes to you, a pleasure that is all our own, between our child and God. The little being knows absolutely nothing but our breast. There is for him but that one shining spot in all the world; he loves it with all his strength, he thinks of nothing but this fountain of his life; he leaves it to sleep, he wakes to return to it. His lips are love inexpressible, and when they fasten there they cause both pain and pleasure, — pleasure which stretches into pain, pain which ends in pleasure. I cannot explain to you a sensation which radiates from my bosom to the sources of life; it seemed that a thousand rays start from that centre to rejoice both heart and soul. To bear a child is nothing; to suckle it, nourish it, is bearing it for all time.

Oh! Louise, there are no caresses of any lover that can equal that of the little rosy fingers which move so softly trying to clutch at life. Ah! those looks that

a babe casts first at our breast and then in our eyes! What dreams we have as we see him hanging by the lips to his treasure! And he fastens not less to the forces of the mind than to those of the body; he employs both blood and intellect; he satisfies beyond desire. The adorable sensation of his first cry, which was to me what the first ray of light must have been to the earth, came over me again when I felt my milk filling his mouth, when his eye first looked at me, when I saw in his first smile his first thought. He has laughed, dear! Well, that smile, that look, that bite, that cry, those four enjoyments are infinite; they go to the depths of the heart, and stir chords there that they alone can touch. The worlds must be fastened upon God as a child is fastened to every fibre of its mother; God is the great mother's heart. There is nothing visible, nothing perceptible in conception, nor even in pregnancy; but to nurse, my Louise, that is a joy for every moment. We see what becomes of our milk; it makes flesh, it blossoms at the tips of those darling fingers, which are like flowers in their delicacy; it makes those transparent nails, it goes to the silky hair, it moves in those little feet. A baby's feet! why, they are a language! that 's how he first expresses himself. To feed, to suckle! Louise, it is a transformation I follow hour by hour with wondering eye. The cries — you do not hear them by the ear, but by the heart

— the smiles of eyes and lips, the kicking of the little feet, ah! you understand them as though God were writing words to you in letters of fire on the firmament. There is nothing else in all the world that interests you; the father? bah! one would kill him if he woke the babe! We alone are all the world for the child, as the child is all the world for us. We are so sure our life is shared; we are so quickly compensated for the pains we have borne, the sufferings we endure! — for there *are* sufferings; may you never have, as I have, a broken breast, a wound those little rosy lips tear open daily. It would be torture, without the joy of watching the baby mouth besmeared with milk; and it is a sad rebuke to beauty, for it only happens, they tell me, to delicate skins.

In five months my young monkey has grown the prettiest creature that ever mother bathed with joyful tears, and washed and brushed and combed and decked with baby finery, — for God knows with what indefatigable ardor we dress and brush and comb and wash and change and kiss these little flowers! But my monkey is now no longer a monkey, he's a "baby," as my English nurse calls him; a pink and white *baby;* and, as he feels he is loved, he does n't cry *too* much. But, to tell the truth, I am seldom away from him, so he has n't much chance to cry; I try to enter into his little soul.

Dear, something has come into my heart for Louis, — a feeling which is not love, but which in a loving woman would be the crown of love. I almost think this tenderness, this gratitude goes beyond love. From all that you have told me, darling, there seems to me too much of earth in love; but here I find — how shall I say it? — something religious, something divine in the affection a happy mother gives to him from whom proceed these long, these eternal joys. The joy of a mother is a light which lightens the future, but reflects upon the past the charm of memory.

Old Monsieur de l'Estorade and Louis have redoubled all their kindness to me; I am like a new person to them; their words, their looks go to my soul. The old grandfather is like a child himself; he looks at me admiringly. The first time I went down to breakfast and he saw me eating, and then giving suck to his grandson, he wept. The tears in his dry old eyes, where money usually shines, did me inexpressible good; it seemed to me that the good man felt my joys.

As for Louis, the very trees and the stones in the high-road would know he had a son. He spends whole hours gazing at that sleeping baby. He says he does n't know when he shall get accustomed to it. These excessive demonstrations of joy have revealed to me the extent of their fears and apprehensions.

My poor Louis has changed suddenly for the better.

He reads and studies much more than he did. The child has doubled the ambition of the father. As for me, my dear soul, I grow happier and happier every hour; for every hour, every moment brings a new tie between a mother and her child. What I feel within me proves to me that this feeling is imperishable, natural, equable at all moments; whereas, I do suspect love of being intermittent. No one can love the same at all moments; the fabric of life cannot always be embroidered in vivid colors; love must and ought to cease. But motherhood has no decline to fear; it increases with every need of the child; it develops as he develops. Is n't it at once a passion, a need, a sentiment, a duty, a necessity, — happiness, in short?

Yes, my darling, this is the special life of womanhood. Our craving for self-devotion is satisfied; we can find no cause for jealousies here. Perhaps it is for us the only point at which Nature and Society are in harmony. Here Society has enriched Nature; that is, it has added to the instinct of motherhood the spirit of Family, the continuation of name, blood, and fortune. With what love a woman ought to surround the dear being who has first made known to her these wondrous joys, who has first brought forth the powers of her soul, and taught her the great art of motherhood! The law of primogeniture, which has come through all ages from the origin of the world, and is part of Society itself, cannot, it seems to me, be put in question.

Ah, how many things an infant teaches its mother! There are so many pledges made between ourselves and virtue in the ceaseless protection we give to its feeble being, that a woman is not in her true sphere until she is a mother. Then only do her powers unfold; then she puts in practice the duties of her life; then she has all its joys and all its pleasures. A woman who is not a mother is, must be, an incomplete being; she has missed her destiny. Make haste to be a mother, my darling; multiply your present happiness with my ecstasy.

I left my letter abruptly, hearing your godson cry; I heard him from the farther end of the garden. I can't let this letter go without adding a few words; I have just reread it, and I am a little shocked at the commonness of some of the sentiments contained in it. What I feel, Louise, I think all mothers must feel as I do, must express as I do; but perhaps you will laugh at me, as we laugh at those fathers who talk about the beauty and intellect of their progeny, and think none other is like it. But after all, my treasure, the grand meaning of this letter is this — and I repeat it: I am as happy now as I was unhappy before. This manor is to me the promised land. I have crossed my desert. A thousand kisses, dearest! Write to me. I can now read of your happiness and your love without shedding tears. Adieu.

XXXII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

March, 1826.

Can it be three months, dear Renée, since I wrote to you, and since you have written to me? I am the guiltiest of the two, for I did not answer your last letter. But you are not touchy, — that is, you never used to be.

Your silence about the breakfast service made Macumer and me conclude that you agreed to our plan; and the charming little works of art leave Paris this morning for Marseille. The artists have been all these months about them; and when Felipe proposed to me to go and see the service before it was packed, I suddenly came to a sense that we had not written to each other since that letter which made me feel I was a mother with you.

My dear, this terrible Paris! that's my excuse; and now I should like to hear yours. Oh, the world, society, what a gulf! Have I not already said to you that to live in Paris one must be Parisian. The world here destroys all sentiments, steals your time, and would destroy your heart if you allowed it. What an amazing masterpiece is that creation of Célimène in Molière's "Misanthrope!" She is the woman of the world of

Louis XIV.'s time, and ours too, — the woman of the world of all epochs. Where should I be without my ægis, without my Felipe's love? I told him this morning, thinking of these things, that he was my saviour. Though my evenings are given up to fêtes, balls, concerts, theatres, I find at home the joys of love and its sweet follies, which expand my heart and efface the stains of the world.

I never dine at home except on the days when we invite persons whom we call friends. I have taken a day, Wednesday, when I receive; otherwise I am seldom in the house. I have entered into social competition with Mesdames d'Espard and de Maufrigneuse, also with the old Duchesse de Lenoncourt. My house is considered very amusing. I have allowed myself to be made the fashion, seeing how delighted Felipe is with my success. I give him all my mornings; but from four in the afternoon till two o'clock at night I belong to Paris. Macumer makes an admirable master of the house; he is so witty and so grave, so truly a grandee, and yet so gracious and graceful; he would make a woman love him, even if she had married him for "convenience."

My father and mother have started for Madrid. Louis XVIII. being dead, the duchess had no difficulty in getting our good King Charles X. to appoint her poet as second secretary to the embassy. My brother, the Duc de Rhétoré, deigns to look upon me as a

personage. As for the Comte de Chaulieu, that fancy soldier owes me a debt of eternal gratitude. My fortune was used, before my father's departure, in buying and entailing on him an estate worth forty thousand francs a year, and in bringing about his marriage with Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, an heiress in Touraine. The king, who does not wish the name and titles of the houses of Lenoncourt and Givry to die out, is about to authorize my brother by letters-patent to take the name, title, and arms of Lenoncourt-Givry. How could a king of France allow those noble blazons and that heroic device, *Faciem semper monstramus*, to perish? Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, the granddaughter and only heiress of the Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry, will have, they say, an income of over a hundred thousand francs. My father stipulated that the arms of the Chaulieus should be quartered on those of the Lenoncourts. My brother will therefore be Duc de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu. The brother of Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, to whom this great fortune would go by right, is in the last stages of consumption; his death is expected at any moment. The marriage will take place next winter, after the mourning is over. I am told I shall have a charming sister-in-law in Madeleine de Mortsauf.

So you see, Renée, how wise my father was in the arguments he used to me. This result has won me the admiration of a great many persons, and it explains my

marriage. Because of his old affection for my grandmother, the Prince de Talleyrand extols Macumer, so that our success in the world is now complete. I reign in this Paris, where two years ago I was of no account. Macumer sees his happiness envied by every one, for I am held to be "the most brilliant woman in Paris;" you must know that there is a score of "the most brilliant women in Paris." All the men warble notes of love to me, or look their envy with their eyes. Really and truly there is in this concert of desires and admirations such intense satisfaction to one's vanity that I now understand the excessive extravagance women commit to enjoy these frivolous and passing pleasures. Such triumphs intoxicate one's pride, vanity, self-love, — in short, all the sentiments that make our *self*. This perpetual worship inebriates so violently that I am no longer surprised to see how egotistical, frivolous, and forgetful women are in this whirl of dissipation. Society goes to the head. We lavish the flowers of our hearts and minds, our most precious time, our most generous efforts, on persons who pay us with smiles and jealousy; who exchange the false coin of their phrases, compliments, and adulation against the pure gold of our courage, our sacrifices, our efforts to be beautiful, well-dressed, witty, affable, and charming to all. We all know how costly this business is; we know that we are robbed in it, and yet we give our-

selves up to it all the same. Ah! my dearest, how one thirsts for a true heart; how precious to me are Felipe's love and devotion; and how I love you! With what joy do I make my preparations to go and rest at Chantepleurs, away from the comedies of the rue du Bac and the salons of Paris. I have just reread your last letter, and I can no better describe to you this infernal paradise of Paris than by saying that it is impossible for a woman of the world to be a mother.

I shall see you soon, dearest. We stay a week at Chantepleurs, and shall be with you about the 10th of May. Renée! we shall meet again after more than two years! What changes! We are both women, wives, — I the happiest of mistresses, you the happiest of mothers. If I have not written to you, darling, it is not from forgetfulness. And my godson, the little monkey, is he still as pretty? Does he do me credit? He is nearly nine months old now. I should like to be present when he takes his first steps in the world; but Macumer says that precocious children seldom walk at ten months old. What famous talks we shall have, like the good old times at Blois! I shall see, too, whether child-bearing spoils the figure, as they say it does.

If you answer, all-glorious mother, direct to Chantepleurs.

XXXIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

Ah! my child, if you ever become a mother you will know if it is possible to write letters during the first two months we nurse a baby. Mary, my English nurse, and I are tired out all the time. I think I did not tell you that I set my heart on making everything myself. Before the great event I had sewn with my own fingers all the baby-clothes, and embroidered all the caps. I'm a slave, my darling, a slave day and night. In the first place, Armand-Louis sucks when he wants to, and he is always wanting. Then he has to be washed and dressed and changed so often; and a mother loves to look at him asleep, and sing him songs, and carry him about in her arms if the weather is fine; so that really she has no time to herself. If you have society to take up yours, I have my baby, our baby! What a rich, full life! Oh, my dearest, you will soon be here, and you shall see for yourself!

But I am so afraid his teething will begin and he 'll be cross when you are here, and a cry-baby. He does n't cry much now, but then, to be sure, I am always with him. Children only cry because they have wants nobody guesses, but I am on the look-out for all of his. Oh,

Louise, my heart enlarges, while you say yours is getting belittled in the service of the world.

I am expecting you with all the impatience of a hermit. I want to know what you think of l'Estorade, just as, I make no doubt, you want to know what I think of Macumer. Write me from your last night's stopping-place. My men wish to go and meet our illustrious guests. I welcome you, queen of Paris, to our poor manor-house, where you will be loved indeed.

XXXIV.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO THE VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE.

April, 1826.

THE new address on my letter will announce to you, dearest, the success of my solicitations. Your father-in-law is now Comte de l'Estorade. I did not wish to leave Paris without obtaining what you desired; and I write you this line in presence of the Keeper of the Seals, who has just come to say that the ordinance is signed. We shall meet soon.

XXXV.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

MARSEILLE, July.

My abrupt departure from La Crampade must have astonished you, and I am ashamed of it; but as I am truthful in all things and love you as deeply as ever, I shall tell you the whole trouble candidly in four words, — I am horribly jealous. Felipe looked at you too much; you and he had little conversations beneath your rock which tortured me; they changed my nature and made me bad. Your really Spanish beauty must have reminded him of his own country and that Marie Heredia, of whom I am jealous — for I am jealous of the past. Your magnificent black hair and your brown eyes, that forehead where the joys of maternity seem to put into relief past suffering like the shadows thrown by a radiant light; that purity of the Southern skin, whiter than my blond fairness, that grandeur of form, that breast, shining among its laces like a delicious fruit when you give it to my beautiful godson, — all that wounded both my eyes and my heart. There was no use in putting blue-bells among my curls, or brightening their faded fairness with cherry ribbons. I paled before a Renée I never dreamed of finding in that oasis at La Crampade.

Felipe envied that child, too much, — so much that I began to hate it. Yes, that insolent baby life which fills your home, and brightens it, and laughs and cries there, I wanted it for my own. I saw regret in Macumer's eyes. I wept for two whole nights, unknown to him. I was tortured in your house. You are too beautiful as a woman, too happy as a mother; I cannot stay near you. Ah! hypocrite, you wrote me melancholy letters, pitying yourself! In the first place, your l'Estorade is charming; he talks agreeably; his hair with its few white threads is very pretty; his eyes are fine, and his Southern manners have a nameless charm which pleases. From what I have seen I think there can be no doubt of his election as deputy from the Mouths-of-the-Rhone; he will certainly make his mark in the Chamber, and we will help him, for I shall be always at your service in whatever concerns your ambitions. The miseries of his exile have given him that calm, composed air which seems to me to be at least one half of statesmanship. In my opinion, dear, the essential thing in politics is to look grave. I tell Macumer his looks ought to make him a great statesman.

Well, now that I have seen with my own eyes that you are happy, I wing my way back, contentedly, to my dear Chantepleurs; where Felipe must arrange to be a father, for I will never see you again until I have a child at my breast as beautiful as yours. I deserve

all the names you choose to give me; I 'm absurd, infamous, without common-sense. Yes, a woman is all that when she is jealous. I 'm not angry with you, but I *suffered*, and you must forgive me for getting away from that suffering. Two days more and I should have committed some dreadful folly. Yes, I should have made an exhibition of bad taste.

But in spite of these torments which gnawed my heart, I am glad I went, glad I have seen you so beautiful, so fruitful; still my friend in the midst of your maternal joys, as I am ever yours in the midst of my precious loves. Here, at Marseille, a few miles away from you, I am already proud of you, proud of that noble mother of a family you are fated to become. With what strong sense you divined your vocation! you seem to me to have been born for a mother rather than for love, just as I was born for love rather than for motherhood. Some women can be neither; they are too ugly or too dull. A good mother, and a wife who is her husband's mistress, should have at all times sense, judgment, intelligence, and yet know how to employ the exquisite charms of womanhood. Oh! I observed you well; is n't that as good as telling you, my kitten, that I admired you? Yes, your children will be happy; they will be well brought up, bathed in the fountains of your tenderness, taught by the lights of your own soul.

Tell the truth about my departure to Louis, but give it some colorable pretext in the eyes of your father-in-law. Felipe does not know why I came away, and will never know. If he asks, I shall invent some reason. Perhaps I will tell him that you were jealous of me. Grant me that little fib.

Adieu; I write in haste that you may get this letter at your breakfast-hour; the postilion is charged to give it into your own hand. Come to Chantepleurs in October; I shall be all alone during the time that Macumer is in Sardinia, where he wishes to make great improvements to his estates. At any rate, that's the project he has in mind at the present moment; it is a fancy of his to be always making projects; it makes him feel independent; but I notice that he is quite uneasy in telling them to me. Adieu.

XXXVI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

My dear, our astonishment was inexpressible when we learned at breakfast-time that you were gone; and when the postilion who took you to Marseille brought me your crazy letter my amazement was beyond words. Why, your husband and I were talking of you and

your happiness on "Louise's bench" under the rock; and you are very wrong to be displeased by it. *Ingrata!* I condemn you to return here at my first call. In that odious letter, scribbled on inn paper! you did not even tell me where you were going next; so I direct my answer to Chantepleurs.

Listen to me, dear sister of my choice, and remember first and before all, that I want you happy. Your husband, my Louise, has a depth of soul and thought which are as imposing as the gravity of his manner and his noble countenance. In his very ugliness, which is so distinguished, in that velvet glance lies a power that is really majestic; it was therefore some time before I could establish an intimacy with him, without which it is difficult to observe a nature to its depths. The man has been a diplomat, remember, and he adores you as he adores God; therefore he would of course dissimulate about his deepest feelings. And yet, after a while, I ended by discovering, without his knowledge and in spite of his diplomacy, certain things which you, my darling, have no idea of.

You and I represent two things. I am slightly the embodiment of Reason, you are Imagination. I am grave Duty, you are gay Love. This contrast, which originally existed in our natures, fate has been pleased to continue in the circumstances of our lives. I am a humble country viscountess, ardently ambitious, desir-

ous of leading her family to honor and prosperity; whereas the world already bows down to the Baron de Macumer ex-Duc de Soria, and to you, duchess by right, who reign a queen in Paris, where it is so difficult even for kings to reign. You already enjoy a fine fortune, which Macumer will double if he carries out his projects in Sardinia on his vast domains; the resources of which are well-known, by the bye, at Marseille. Admit, therefore, that the one of us two who ought to be jealous is I.

However, let us thank God that our hearts are both placed too high to suffer our friendship to descend to such vulgar pettiness. I know you; you are ashamed at having left me. Now, in spite of your flight, I will not spare you one word of certain things I meant to say to you to-day on your bench beneath my rock. Read me, I implore you, with attention, for the matter concerns you and your happiness more than it does Macumer, — though he counts for much in my moral.

In the first place, my darling, you do not love him. Before two years have passed you will weary of his adoration. You will never see in Felipe a husband, only a lover whom you can play with heedlessly, as all women do with their lovers. No, he does not compel your respect; you do not feel that profound esteem, that tenderness mingled with awe, which a woman who loves has for the man in whom she sees a god. Oh!

I have studied love, my angel; I have thrown, more than once, a plummet into the gulf of my heart. After examining you through and through I say again: You do not love.

Yes, dear queen of Paris, like other queens you would like to be treated as a commoner woman; you would like to be ruled, mastered by some strong man who, instead of adoring, would bruise your arm in a moment of jealousy. Macumer adores you too much to blame you or oppose you. A single look of yours, a single coaxing word controls his will. Sooner or later, you will despise him for loving you too much. Alas! he spoils you, just as I spoilt you at the convent; for you are one of the most fascinating of women, and you possess one of the most enchanting minds that soul can imagine. Above all, you are *true*, — and often the world requires, for our own happiness, a species of falsehood to which you will never condescend.

For instance: the world demands that a woman shall never allow the power she exercises over her husband to be seen. Socially speaking, a husband should no more seem the lover of his wife, when he is really so, than the wife should play the part of mistress to her husband. You both break this social law. My child, the thing the world pardons least (if I am to judge by what you have told me of it) is happiness; and therefore, it is best to hide it. But this is a small matter.

There is between two lovers an equality which should never, as I think, appear between a wife and her husband, under pain of a social overturn which would lead to irreparable evils. A man without power is a fearful thing, but there is something worse, — a man made powerless. Within a given time you will reduce Macumer to be but the shadow of a man; he will no longer have a will; he will no longer be himself, but a thing trained to your use; you will have so assimilated him, as it were, that instead of being two persons in the household there will be but one, and that one, consequently, incomplete. You will suffer from it, but the evil will be without remedy before you deign to open your eyes.

We may say and do what we like, but our sex will never be endowed with the qualities which distinguish a man; and these qualities are all the more necessary because they are indispensable to the Family. At this moment, in spite of his devotion, Macumer has a glimpse of these truths; he feels himself diminished by his love. His journey to Sardinia shows me that he seeks by a momentary separation to recover possession of himself. You have not hesitated to use all the power conferred on you by love. Your authority shows itself in your gesture, in your glance, in your tones. Oh! dearest, you are, as your mother told you, a courtesan, working on a man's love. You have seen, I make no doubt, that I am superior to Louis, but I

would never contradict him; I respect him before the public as the power in the family. Hypocrisy, you say. In the first place, the counsels I think it right to give him, my opinions, my ideas, I reserve for his own ear when we are alone together; but even then, my dear love, I do assure you I never show any sense of superiority to him. If I did not continue privately, as well as publicly, to treat him with the respect of a wife, he would no longer have faith in himself.

My dearest, the perfection of loving-kindness is to efface ourselves so thoroughly that those we benefit shall not think themselves inferior to the one who benefits them; and this form of hidden devotion is full of untold pleasure. Why! it has been my glory to mislead you, yourself, and to hear your praises of Louis. Prosperity, happiness, and hope, have made him regain in two years all that misfortune, misery, abandonment, and doubt had made him lose.

And so I say that, according to my observation, you love Felipe for your sake, and not for his sake. There is great truth in what your father said to you; the egotism of a great lady is lurking beneath the spring-tide flowers of your love. Ah! my child, I must love you well to be willing to write to you such cruel truths!

Let me tell you (on condition that you will not repeat one word of this to the baron) the end of one of my

talks with him. We had been singing your praises in every key, — for he sees plainly enough that I love you with a sister's love, — and I led him, little by little, into confidences.

"Louise," I said to him, "has not yet known the trials of life; fate has treated her like a petted child, and perhaps she will end by being unhappy if you do not make yourself a father to her as well as a lover."

"But can I?" he said.

He stopped short, like a man who sees a precipice before him. That exclamation sufficed to show me his state of mind. If you had not gone away so suddenly he would, in a few days' time, have said more to me.

My angel, when a man becomes conscious that he is powerless, when he finds satiety in happiness, when he feels, I will not say degraded, but without dignity in your presence, the blame his conscience will put upon him will cause him a species of remorse, painful to you because you will then feel yourself guilty of it. Then you will yourself despise the man you have not accustomed yourself to respect. Reflect on that. Contempt in a woman's heart is the first form of hatred. As you are noble in heart, you will always remember the sacrifices Felipe has made for you; but there will then be no more that he can make, having, as it were, served his whole self to you in this first love-feast; and sorrow

to the man and to the woman who leave no longer anything to be desired. All is then over.

Oh! Louise, change, change; there is still time. If you will behave with Macumer as I behave with Louis you can rouse the lion in that truly great man. Will you not feel a glorious pride in exercising your influence in higher ways than to your own profit, — in making a man of genius a great man, just as I am making a superior man out of a commonplace one?

If you had remained with us I should still have written you this letter. I should have feared your petulance and your wit in a conversation, whereas I know that you will reflect upon the future as you read my words. Dear soul! you have all things to make you happy; don't ruin your happiness! Go back in November to Paris. The occupations and distractions of society, of which I was disposed to complain, are, I see, diversions necessary to your home life, which is too intimate. A married woman should have her reserves, and so should a mother. The mother of a family who does not let her presence be desired by absenting herself sometimes from the household cheapens her value. If I have several children, which I desire for my own happiness, I declare to you that as soon as they reach a certain age I shall reserve to myself some hours every day in which to be alone; for I think we ought to be *desired* by every one, even our children.

Adieu, dear jealous one. Don't you know that a common woman would have been flattered to have caused you that rush of jealousy? Alas! I grieve over it; for I am, and can only be, a mother and a true friend. A thousand kisses. Say anything you like to excuse your departure; if you are not sure of Felipe, I *am* sure of Louis.

XXXVII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

GENOA.

MY DEAREST, — I have had a fancy to see Italy, and am delighted to have run away with Macumer, whose *projects* about Sardinia are postponed.

This glorious land enchants, nay, ravishes me. Here the churches, and especially the chapels, have a dainty, loving air which might make a Protestant long to be a Catholic. Macumer has been much fêted; the king congratulates himself on acquiring such a subject. If I desired it Felipe would be made Sardinian ambassador to France; we receive much attention at court.

If you write to me address your letters to Florence. I have no time to write to you in detail, but I will tell you about our journey when we meet in Paris. We shall stay here only one week; then we go to Florence

by Livorno, stay a month in Tuscany and a month at Naples, so as to reach Rome in November. We shall return by way of Venice, spend the first two weeks of December there, go to Milan and Turin, and be back in Paris for the month of January. It is like a wedding journey; the novelty of the scenes renews our dear honeymoon. Macumer has never been in Italy, and we have made our entrance by that glorious road, the Cornice, which must have been constructed by the fairies.

Adieu, my treasure. Don't be vexed if I can't write; it is impossible to get a moment to one's self in travelling. I have only time to see, feel, and gloat over my impressions. But as for telling them! I shall wait till they take the tints of memory.

XXXVIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

September.

My dear Louise, — There is a long letter waiting you at Chantepleurs, — a reply to the one you wrote me from Marseille. This "wedding journey" which you tell me of, so far from diminishing the fears I have expressed to you in that letter, make me so anxious

that I beg you to write to the Nivernais and tell your people to forward it.

The ministry have resolved, they say, to dissolve the Chamber. If this is a misfortune for the crown, which ought to have employed this last session of the legislature in making laws necessary to the consolidation of its power, it is also a misfortune for us. Louis will not be forty until the close of 1827. Fortunately, my father consents to be made deputy, and will resign when the time comes.

Your godson has taken his first steps without his godmother; he is delightful in every way, and is beginning to make me those gracious little signs and gestures which tell me he is no longer an organism which sucks, a little animal, but a soul; his smiles are full of thoughts. I have been so fortunate in my nursing that I can wean him in December. One year suffices. Children who are suckled too long become stupid; I hold to all the old nurses' dictums.

You must be having a glorious success in Italy, my beautiful fair one. Tenderest love.

XXXIX.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

ROME, December.

I HAVE received your infamous letter, which my steward, at my request, has forwarded from Chantepleurs. Oh, Renée! But I spare you all that my indignation suggests. I will tell you only the effects produced by your letter.

On our return from the fête given to us by the ambassador, where I shone with all my brilliancy, and from which Macumer returned in a passion of admiration for me I cannot describe to you, I read him your horrible letter; and I read it weeping, at the risk of looking ugly to him. My dear Saracen fell at my feet, calling you demented, drivelling; he took me to the balcony whence we could overlook a part of Rome. There his language was worthy of the scene that lay before our eyes, — for the moonlight was superb. As we have learned Italian, and always speak it now, his love, expressed in that soft language so favorable to passion, seemed to me sublime. He told me that even if you spoke the truth and were prophetic, he preferred an hour of love with me to a century of other life; that counting life as he did, he had already lived a thousand

years. He implored me to be ever his mistress, and said he wished no other title or distinction than that of my lover. He was, he said, so proud and happy in knowing, day by day, how dear he is to me, that if God appeared to him and bade him choose between thirty years of life according to your doctrines, with five children, and five years of life containing our precious, absorbing, exclusive love, his choice was made, — he would rather be loved as I love him, and die.

These protestations, said in my ear, my head on his shoulder, his arm round my waist, were suddenly interrupted by the cry of a bat or an owl. That omen of death made such a cruel impression on me that Felipe had to carry me, half-fainting, to my bed. But don't be anxious; although that horoscope echoed dismally through my soul, this morning I am quite well again. When I rose I threw myself on my knees before Felipe and with my eyes on his, his hands in mine, I said to him: —

"My angel, I am but a child; Renée may be right; perhaps it is only love that I love in thee; but be sure of this, that there is, and can be, no other sentiment in my heart, and that I love thee according to my nature. If in any of my ways, in the slightest things of my life and of my soul, there is anything contrary to what you wish, or have hoped for in me, tell me so, make me see

it! I shall be glad to listen to thee, and guide my conduct by the light in thine eyes. Renée frightens me, she loves me so!"

Macumer had no voice with which to answer me; he burst into tears. I thank you, Renée; I did not know till *now* how deeply my noble, my royal Macumer loves me. Rome is the city for love. When we have a passion it is here we should come; the arts and God are sharers in it.

We shall find the Duc and Duchesse de Soria in Venice. If you write, direct to Paris, for we leave Rome in three days; the ambassador's fête was given as a farewell to us.

P. S. Oh, you dear simpleton! your letter shows that you know nothing of love beyond ideas of it. Learn this: love is a principle, the effects of which are so dissimilar that no theory can embrace or lay down laws for them. This is meant for the instruction of my philosopher in petticoats.

XL.

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

January, 1827.

My father is elected deputy, my father-in-law is dead, and I am about to be confined again. Those

are the events of the close of this year in our household. I tell them to you at once to remove the painful impression of my black seal.

Dearest, your letter from Rome makes me tremble. You are two children. Felipe is either a diplomatist who is dissimulating, or a man who loves you as he would love a courtesan to whom he abandons fortune and all the higher qualities that are in him. You take me for a driveller, so I shall say no more, — except this: that in studying our two destinies I have come to a harsh conclusion: If you wish to be loved, *do not love.*

Louis obtained the cross of the Legion of honor when he was appointed member of the general council. Now, as he has been a member nearly three years, and as my father (whom you will no doubt see in Paris during the session) has asked for the grade of officer for his son-in-law, will you do me the kindness to employ a little strategy in the matter and keep a motherly eye upon it? But be sure not to meddle with the affairs of my very honored father, the Comte de Maucombe, who wants to be made a marquis; reserve all your favors for *me.* When Louis is a deputy, which will be next winter, we shall go to Paris, and move heaven and earth to obtain for him some place in the general government. I mean then to lay by our present income and live on the salary of the place. My

father's opinions are between the centre and the right, and he only wants a title. As our family was famous as far back as King René, Charles X. can hardly refuse a Maucombe. I am rather afraid my father may take it into his head to solicit some favor for my younger brother; but if the marquisate is kept dangling a little too high above his head he can only think of himself.

January 15.

Ah! Louise, I have been in hell! If I have the courage to speak to you of my sufferings it is because you are another myself. I shall try to never again let my thoughts go back to those five dreadful days. The very word "convulsion" sends a shudder through my being.

Five days! They were not days, they were five centuries of suffering. So long as a mother has not suffered this martyrdom she knows nothing of the meaning of that word "suffering." I thought how happy you were to have no children; judge by that how beside myself I was.

The evening before the terrible day, the weather, which was heavy and almost hot, seemed to oppress my little Armand. He, usually so gentle and caressing, was cross; he cried at everything; wanted to play and broke his toys. Perhaps all ailments first show themselves in children by a change of temper. After ob-

serving this unusual naughtiness I noticed that Armand flushed and then paled, — symptoms I attributed to the cutting of four large teeth which were all coming through at the same time. So I put him to bed near me, waking up constantly to watch him. During the night he had some fever; but that did not make me uneasy, for I still attributed it to the teeth. Toward morning he said, "Mamma!" asking for something to drink, but in such a voice, and with such a strange, convulsive gesture that my blood froze. I sprang from the bed to get him some sugared water. Imagine my horror when, on giving him the cup, I saw he was rigid; he kept repeating "Mamma," in that voice which was not his voice — indeed it was not a voice at all. I took his hand, it made no motion, it was stiff. I put the cup to his lips. The poor little fellow drank in a terrifying way, in convulsive gulps, and the water made a strange noise in his throat. Then he clutched desperately at me, and I saw his eyes turned by some inward power, till the whites only showed. I uttered a dreadful cry; Louis came.

"A doctor! a doctor!" I cried, "he is dying!"

Louis disappeared, and my poor Armand said again, "Mamma! mamma!" and clung to me. That was the last moment when he knew he had a mother. The pretty veins of his forehead were now injected, the convulsion began.

For a whole hour before the doctors came I held that child, — so vigorous, white and rosy, that flower, my pride, my joy, — stiff as a piece of wood ; and what eyes ! I shudder as I recall them. Black, shrunken, shrivelled, mute, my pretty Armand was a mummy. A doctor, two doctors, brought by Louis from Marseille, stood planted there upon their legs, like two birds of ill omen ; they made me shudder. One talked of brain fever, the other said it was only convulsions common to children. The doctor from our village seemed to me the wisest, because he prescribed nothing. "It is teething," said one ; "It is fever," said the other. At last they agreed to put leeches on the neck, and ice to the head.

I felt like dying. To see that blue-black body, with not a cry, not a motion, in place of a creature so full of life and noise. There was a moment when my mind wandered, and I laughed out loud when I saw the leeches hanging to that neck I loved to kiss, and that charming head with its cap of ice. Dear, they cut off all the hair you thought so pretty in order to apply the ice. Every ten minutes or so the convulsion returned ; the poor child was twisted into every shape ; he was sometimes pale, sometimes violet. When his limbs, always so soft and flexible, struck together they gave a sound like wood. That insensible little creature had smiled to me, spoken to me, and had just called me

"Mamma!" As I stood there helpless, volumes of anguish crossed my soul and convulsed it as hurricanes convulse the sea; I felt every tie by which a child is bound to our hearts shaken.

My mother, who might have helped, advised, supported me, was in Paris. Mothers know more about convulsions than doctors, I think. After four days and four nights, passed in alternations of hope and fear that nearly killed me, the doctors all agreed to apply a horrible ointment to make an open sore. Sore! on my Armand! who was playing and laughing five days earlier and learning to say "godmother!" I refused, and said it was best to trust to nature. Louis scolded me; he believed in the doctors. A man is always a man. In these terrible illnesses there comes a moment when death takes form, and during that moment this remedy, which I abhorred, seemed to me safety. Louise, the skin was so dry, so rough, so hard that the ointment could not bite it! Then I burst into tears, there at the bed's head — till the pillow was wet. The doctors! they were at dinner! Seeing myself alone, I stripped from my child those medical appliances; I took him, half beside myself, in my arms; I pressed him to my bosom, I leaned my forehead on his forehead, and I prayed to God to give him my life, striving with all my might to communicate it to him; I held him so for several minutes, thinking to die with him

rather than be separated by life or death. Dear, I felt his limbs relax; the tension yielded, my child moved, the horrible dark colors disappeared. I cried out as I did the night he was taken ill. The doctors came up; I showed them Armand.

"He is saved!" said the elder of them.

Oh! what words! what music! the heavens opened. Two hours later Armand was reborn. But I was annihilated. Without that balm of joy nothing could have saved me from an illness. Oh, my God! by what anguish hast thou attached the child to the mother. What hooks hast thou buried in our hearts to which he hangs! Was I not mother enough, I, who wept for joy at his first stammerings, his first steps, — I, who have studied my child for hours together, striving to know my duty and teach myself the dear profession of a mother? Was there need of causing me this terror; of showing these awful images to me who made my child an idol?

As I write to you, my Louise, our Armand is laughing and shouting and playing. I try to discover the cause of this horrible child's malady, remembering always that I am now pregnant. Was it teething? Was it some special action of the brain? Have children who endure these convulsions some imperfection in their nervous systems? All these ideas troubled me as much for the present as for the future. Our country

doctor says it is a nervous affection caused by teething. I 'd give all my teeth if Armand could only have all his. When I see one of those white pearls just piercing his inflamed gums, a cold sweat breaks out all over me.

The heroism with which my dear angel suffered shows me he will have something of my fortitude; he gave me glances that cleft my heart. The science of medicine does n't know much on the causes of that sort of tetanus, which ends almost as rapidly as it begins; and which cannot be prevented or cured. One thing is certain, I repeat it: to see her child in convulsions is hell for a mother. With what passion I kiss him now! How long I can hold him in my arms and carry him!

To have this anguish when I expect to be confined again in six weeks has been a terrible aggravation of the martydom; I fear its effects on the coming one.

Adieu, my dear beloved Louise; don't desire children, that 's my last word.

XLI.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

PARIS.

POOR angel! Macumer and I forgave you all your *badnesses* on hearing of your troubles. I shuddered, I suf-

fered on reading the details of this double torture, and I certainly am less grieved at having no children. But let me hasten to tell you of Louis's appointment; he may now wear an officer's rosette. You want a little girl, and probably you will have one; your two wishes will be satisfied, oh, you lucky Renée!

The marriage of my brother and Mademoiselle de Mortsauf was celebrated on our return. Our charming king, who is really delightfully kind, gave my brother the reversion of the position of first gentleman of the Bed-chamber which his father-in-law now holds. "The office ought to go with the title," the king said to the Duc de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu; but he insisted that the arms of Mortsauf should be added to those of Lenoncourt.

My father was a hundred-fold right in all he preached to me. Without my fortune nothing of all this could have taken place. My father and mother came from Madrid to be present at the marriage, and return there the day after the fête I give to-morrow to the bride and bridegroom.

The carnival will be very brilliant this year. The Duc and Duchesse de Soria are in Paris. Their presence makes me rather uneasy. Marie Heredia is certainly one of the most beautiful women in Europe, and I don't like the way Felipe looks at her. So I have redoubled in tenderness to him. "*She* would never have loved you thus," is a speech I take care not to say

to him in words; but it is written in my looks and in all my movements. Heaven knows how coquettish and elegant I make myself. Yesterday Madame de Maufrigneuse said to me: "My dear, we must all lay down our arms to you."

The fact is I amuse Felipe so that he must think his sister-in-law as stupid as a Spanish cow. I don't so much regret not having a little Saracen of my own, because the duchess is on the point of being confined here in Paris, and it spoils her beauty; if she has a boy it is to be called Felipe in honor of the exiled brother. Malignant fate demands that I shall be its godmother.

Adieu, dearest. I shall go to Chantepleurs very early this year, for our journeyings have cost an exorbitant sum. I shall leave here by the end of March, and live economically in Nivernais. Besides, Paris bores me. Felipe sighs as I do for the dear solitude of our park, our cool meadows, and the Loire, spangled with its sands — ah! no river is like it. Chantepleurs will seem to me delightful after the pomps and vanities of even Italy; for, after all, such splendors do weary one, and the glance of a lover is more beautiful than any *capo d'opera*, whatever it may be.

We shall expect you there, and I promise not to be jealous of you again. You may sound the heart of my Macumer at your ease, and fish up all the interjections you like, and lay hold of all his scruples; I give him

over to you with superb confidence. Ever since that scene in Rome Felipe loves me more than ever. He told me yesterday (he is looking over my shoulder as I write) that his sister-in-law, the Marie of his youth, his betrothed Marie, the Princess Heredia, his earliest dream, was — stupid! Oh, dearest, I am worse than an opera-girl; that speech gave me pleasure! I had remarked to Felipe that she spoke French incorrectly; she pronounces *sain* for *cinq*, and *cheu* for *je;* and then, she may be beautiful, but she has no grace, and not the slightest vivacity of mind. When one pays her compliments she looks at you like a woman who is not accustomed to receive them. With a nature like his, Felipe would have left her two months after marriage. The Duc de Soria, Don Fernando, is very well suited to her; he is generous, but he is a spoilt child, — it is easy enough to see that. There! I might be satirical, and make you laugh; but I 'll say no more than the truth.

Tender regards, my darling.

XLII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

My little girl is two weeks old; my mother was sponsor, together with an old grand-uncle of Louis's. We have called her Jeanne Athénaïs.

As soon as I am able I will pay you a visit at Chantepleurs, as you are not afraid of a wet-nurse, which is my present vocation. Your godson says your name; only he calls it *Matoumer*, for he cannot pronounce his *c's*. You 'll dote on him. He has cut all his teeth, and eats meat like a big boy; and he runs about and thrusts his nose into everything like a rat. But I watch him always with anxious eyes; and I am in despair that I cannot have him with me during my confinement; the doctor insists on forty days in my room for the sake of certain precautions. Alas! my child, there 's no such thing as getting accustomed to child-bearing. The same pains, the same apprehensions return.

My father thought Felipe thinner, and my dear darling also. And yet the Duc and Duchesse de Soria have left Paris, and you have no longer the slightest ground for jealousy. Are you hiding some trouble from me? Your letter was not as long nor as affectionately *thought* as usual. Perhaps, however, it is only a caprice of my dear capricious one.

I have written too much; my nurse is scolding me for writing at all, and Mademoiselle Athénaïs de l'Estorade wants her dinner. Adieu; write me one of your good long letters.

XLIII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

For the first time in my life, dear Renée, I have wept alone, under a willow, on a wooden bench, beside my long pond at Chantepleurs, — a delightful spot and view which you will embellish when you come, for the only thing wanting is joyous children. Your fruitfulness makes me think sadly of myself, who have no children after nearly three years of marriage. "Oh," I say in my heart, "if I had to suffer a hundred-fold more than Renée suffered in giving birth to my godson, even if I had to see my child in convulsions, grant, O God! that I have an angelic creature like that little Naïs — who I know is as beautiful as the day, though you did not tell me so. Ah! I recognize my Renée there — you divined my sufferings. Each time that my hopes have failed me, I am for days a victim to the blackest grief. I sing dirges: When shall I embroider little caps? When shall I choose linen for my baby's clothes? When shall I sew the pretty laces to wrap a little head? Am I never to hear a baby creature call me mother, or feel it pull my gown and be my tyrant? Shall I see no traces of those little feet upon the sand, no broken toys about the house? Am I never to buy, as I watch many mothers buying, the coveted things, —

the sabres, dolls, the little tea-sets? And oh! shall I never see that life, that angel soul develop and be to me another Felipe, only more dear? Oh! I want a son to learn how to love a lover more in another himself.

Everything about me, my park, the château, seems deserted and drear. A woman without children is unnatural; we are made to be mothers. Oh! philosopher in petticoats that you are, you have seen life rightly. Barrenness is horrible in everything. My life is too like the sheepfolds of Gessner and Florian, in which Rivarol declared they longed for wolves.

I long to devote myself as you do! I feel within me powers which Felipe neglects; and if I am not to be a mother, fate must bring me some misfortune or some trial. I have just been saying that to my Spanish Moor, and the speech brought the tears to his eyes; however, I made it right by calling him a sublime goose; it won't do to joke about his love.

Sometimes I think I will make *neuvaines*, and pray for children to certain madonnas, or go to certain baths. Next winter I will consult the doctors. I am too furious against myself to tell you more just now. Adieu.

XLIV.

SAME TO SAME.

PARIS, 1829.

MY DEAREST RENÉE, — Why have you left me a whole year without a letter? I am piqued. Do you think that your Louis (who comes to see me every other day) can take your place? It is not enough for me to know that you are well, and that all your affairs are satisfactory; I want your feelings and your ideas, just as I give you mine at the risk of being scolded, or blamed, or misunderstood, for I love you. Your silence and your burial in the country, when you might be here enjoying the parliamentary triumphs of the Comte de l'Estorade, (whose *speechifyings* and devotion have given him a great influence, and will place him very high before the session is over) make me uneasy. Do you spend your life writing him instructions? Numa did n't go so far from his Egeria. Why did n't you seize this occasion to come to Paris? I should have had you four months. Louis told me yesterday that you were coming to fetch him, and to be confined for the third time in Paris — dreadful Mother Gigogne that you are!

After numberless questions and many sighs and plaints, Louis, though now diplomatic, ended by telling me that his great-uncle, the godfather of Athénaïs, was

very ill. So I suppose that in your capacity as a good mother of a family you are making the most of the glory of your deputy to obtain a satisfactory legacy from his maternal relative. Well, we will look after your interests here. Don't be anxious, my Renée; the Lenoncourts, the Chaulieus, and the salon of Madame de Macumer are all at work for Louis. Martignac will probably put him in the Cour des Comptes.

But if you don't tell me what keeps you in the country I shall be angry. Is it to let no one find out that you are the mainspring and policy of the house of l'Estorade; or can it be for the uncle's legacy; or do you fear to be less a mother in Paris? Oh, how I would like to know whether it is that you don't want to be seen here for the first time in your present state. Oh, coquette!

Adieu.

XLV.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

You complain of my silence; you forget the two little brown heads which I govern, and which govern me. Besides, you have discovered for yourself some of the reasons that keep me in the country.

In addition to my duty to our dear old uncle, I did not wish to drag a boy of four and a little girl almost

three to Paris, when I myself was again pregnant. I did not want to embarrass your life or your household with such a party, and — you are right enough — I shrank from appearing to my own disadvantage in the brilliant world in which you reign; and as for lodging-houses and hotels, I have a horror of them.

Louis's great-uncle, on hearing of his nephew's appointment, gave me half his savings, — two hundred thousand francs, and told me to buy a house in Paris; and Louis has just been requested by him to look for one in your quarter. My mother gives me some thirty thousand francs with which to furnish it. So when I do go to Paris for a session it will be to my own home; where I shall endeavor to be worthy, in all sincerity be it said, of the sister of my choice.

I thank you for having placed Louis so favorably with the court; but in spite of the esteem shown for him by Messieurs de Bourmont and de Polignac, who want to have him in their ministry, I don't want him to be so conspicuous; a man is soon compromised in office. I prefer the position in the Cour des Comptes, which is irremovable. Our affairs here are in very good hands; as soon as our bailiff is quite accustomed to his work I shall go and second Louis; don't be afraid.

As for writing long letters, how can I? This one, in which I want to describe to you my every-day life, will

lie on my writing-table a week, I am very sure. Perhaps Armand will make it into tents for his army of tin soldiers drawn up on my carpet, or into ships for the fleet that sails his bath-tub.

One of my days will suffice to tell you all; they are precisely alike and are reduced to two events, — the children are ill, or the children are well. As for me, the simple fact is that in my solitary manor minutes are hours, or hours are minutes, according to the condition of the children. If I have some delightful hours it is after they are in bed, and I have finished rocking one or telling stories to the other to send them to sleep. When I know they are safely asleep beside me I say: "There! I 've nothing more to fear."

To tell the truth, my dearest, during the daytime all mothers invent dangers as soon as the children are out of sight. There are razors for Armand to play with, fire to catch his jacket, a slow-worm to bite him, a fall to bump his head, and ponds to tumble into. So you see that maternity is a series of poems, sweet or terrible as the case may be. There 's not an hour which does not have its joys and fears.

But at night, in my room, comes the hour of waking dreams, when I settle their destinies. Their lives are then lighted by the smiles of angels hovering about their beds. Sometimes Armand calls me in his sleep; I stoop down to kiss his forehead or his sister's feet

and contemplate them both, lying there in their beauty. Those are my festivals! Last night our guardian angel (as I think) made me run from my bed to Naïs's crib, and there I found her with her head too low; and Armand in his, with his legs uncovered and violet with cold. "Ah, little mother!" he said, waking up and kissing me. There, my dear, is a night scene for you.

How wise it is for a mother to have her children always beside her. Can any nurse, no matter how good she is, take them up and comfort them and put them to sleep again when waked by some nightmare as we can? For children do have bad dreams; and to explain one of them is all the more difficult because a child listens with an eye that is sleepy and scared, intelligent and idiotic, all at once; the moment is like an organ-rest between two sleeps. In consequence, my sleep has become so light that I see my little ones and hear them through the gauze of my eyelids. I wake at a sigh, a motion. The monster of convulsions is, for me, always crouching beside their beds.

At daylight the children's prattle begins with the first chirping of the birds. Through the veils of my last sleep their chattering sounds like the warblings at dawn, the disputes of the swallows, — little joyous or plaintive cries, which I hear less with my ears than

my heart. While Naïs tries to work her way from her crib to my bed by pulling herself along by her hands and taking tottering steps, Armand has clambered in like a monkey and is kissing me. Together they make my bed a playground, and the mother is at their mercy. The baby pulls my hair and still wants to suck, while Armand defends my breast as if it were his possession. I can't resist some of their attitudes and their pretty laughs, which explode like rockets. Then we play at ogres and the mother ogress devours with kisses the rosy flesh so soft and dewy, and the eyes so arch with mischief, and the pink shoulders, — which excites a world of little jealousies, all charming. Some days I begin to put on my stockings at eight o'clock, and they are not really on till nine.

Then, my dear, there 's the getting up. Dressing begins. I slip on my wrapper, and turn up the sleeves, and put a waterproof apron in front of me; I bathe and I clean my two little flowers, with Mary's assistance. I alone am the judge of the warmth of the water, for the temperature of a bath counts for half in the cries and tears of children. Then come fleets of paper boats, and flocks of glass ducks; for children's minds must be amused if you want to clean them properly. If you only knew how many pleasures I have to invent for these autocrats in order to push a sponge into every nook and corner you would be

appalled at the cleverness and cunning a mother's trade requires, if accomplished triumphantly. I entreat and scold and promise; I am a humbug of the first water, and all the more because my wheedling has to be ingeniously concealed. No one knows how shrewd children are; God was forced to give the mother a little cunning. A child is a great politician, whom we master as we do a politician, — by his passions. Luckily, these angels find amusement in everything. A brush falls, the soap slips; thereupon gurgles of laughter.

Well, if the triumphs are dearly bought, they are triumphs. God alone (for the father knows nothing of all this) God and you and the angels alone know what looks I exchange with Mary when, after dressing our two little treasures, we behold them, both in perfect array, amid the combs and brushes and sponges and tubs and flannels and the thousand and one details of a *nursery*. I have become so English on this point that I admit the women of that country have a genius for raising children. Though they consider them solely from the point of view of material and physical well-being, they are right in their general system. My children shall always have their feet in flannel and their legs bare. They shall not be swathed and compressed; and never will I allow them to be left alone. The imprisonment of French children in swaddling-clothes

means liberty for the nurse; there 's the secret of them. A true mother is never at liberty, and that is why I have not written to you, — having on my hands the management of this estate, and two children to bring up.

The science of motherhood carries with it many a silent merit, ignored by all and without parade, — virtue in small things, devotion at all hours. You don't think me a woman to withhold myself from a single care, do you? In the least of them there is some affection to be gleaned. Oh! it is so pretty to see a child's smile when he likes his little dinner. Armand has a way of nodding his head which is worth a whole lifetime of love. Why should I leave to another woman the care and pleasure of blowing on a spoonful of soup which Naïs thinks too hot, she whom I weaned at seven months but who still remembers the breast? When a nurse has burned the tongue and lips of a child with something hot she tells the mother it is hunger that makes it cry. To mince up a cutlet for Naïs (who has not yet got her last teeth) and mix it with potato is a work of patience; and really, it is only a mother who, in certain cases, can make an impatient child eat all the food he ought to take at a meal.

Ah! no, Louise, we must care for these dear innocents with our souls; we must trust our own eyes only, our own hands only in dressing them and feeding them

and putting them to sleep. A child's cry is just cause of blame to a mother or nurse, unless it proceeds from some illness ordained by nature. Since I have had two (and I shall soon have three) to care for I have had nothing in my soul but my children. Even you, whom I love so much, have been a memory to me. I am not always dressed by two o'clock. Therefore I say, don't trust the motherliness of mothers whose rooms and gowns and collars are in order.

I must tell you what happened yesterday. The day was so fine I wanted to take my cherubs for a last walk before my confinement, which is close at hand. Well, for a mother, this going out to walk is a poem, looked forward to from night till morn. Armand was to wear for the first time a black velvet jacket, a new collaret I had embroidered for him, and a Scotch cap of the Stuart tartan with a cock's feather. Nais was in pink and white, with a delicious baby-cap, — for she is still a baby, though she will soon lose that pretty name when the little one (whom I feel kicking me and whom I call *my pauper*, because he is the younger brother) comes into the world. I've seen him in my dreams, and I know he is a boy.

Well, caps and collars, jacket and stockings, dainty little shoes, pink garters for the legs, and the muslin frock embroidered in silk, were all laid out upon my bed. When these gay little birds who agree so well

had been duly brushed and curled (the hair of the baby softly bordering her pink and white cap), when the shoes were buttoned and the little naked legs skipped round the nursery, when the two "*clean faces*" as Mary called them, and the sparkling eyes had cried out, "Come, let's go," I quivered and palpitated. Oh! to see that skin we have bathed and sponged ourselves, so fair and fresh with its pretty blue veins, heightened by contrast with the velvet or silk, — why, it is better than a poem! With what passion, never satisfied, do we call them to us for one more kiss on the little necks, prettier than those of the prettiest women! Those little scenes the vulgarest colored pictures of which all mothers stop to look at in the shop windows — I make them every day!

Once out-of-doors, I was proudly enjoying my labors, admiring my little Armand, who looked like the son of a prince and was leading the baby along that little road you remember near our house, when a carriage came by. I tried to draw them aside, and somehow they both tumbled into a mud-puddle, and there were my works of art, my masterpieces, destroyed! I snatched up the baby in my arms, not caring that I ruined my gown, and Mary laid hands on Armand, and we brought them home. When a baby cries and a child gets wet, that's enough; a mother can't think of herself, she is otherwise absorbed.

Dinner-time comes, and I have usually done nothing at all. How to serve both, to put on their napkins, turn up my cuffs, and feed the two is a problem I solve twice a day. As for me, I am the one neglected in the household; often, if the children have been naughty, I am still in curl-papers. My toilet depends on their good behavior. To have a moment to myself, in order to write you these six pages, I have let them cut pictures from my novels and build castles with my books and chequers and mother-of-pearl counters. Naïs is at this moment winding my wools to please herself, in so intricate a manner that she is giving all her little mind to it and does n't say a word.

After all, I have nothing to complain of; my children are robust and free, and they amuse themselves with much less trouble to me than you might think. They are pleased with everything. What they need is liberty, — properly watched, of course; they like that better than toys. A few colored pebbles, pink and yellow, purple or black, little shells, wonders in the sand, are their delight. To possess a great many small things appears to be their idea of wealth. I watch Armand; he talks to the flowers, the flies, the hens; he imitates them; he is on good terms with the insects, which fill him with admiration. All that is small interests them. Armand is beginning to ask the *why* of things. He came just now to see what I was saying to his god-

mother; he takes you for a fairy — there, see what intelligent minds children have!

Alas! my angel, I said I would not sadden you again with my happiness. One thing more I must tell you to paint your godson. The other day a poor man followed us; for the poor know well that no mother accompanied by her child ever denies them alms. Armand does not yet know that any one can want for bread; he is ignorant of what money is, but as he had wished for a trumpet and I had just bought him one, he held it out to the old man saying: —

"Here, take that."

"Will you permit me to keep it?" said the poor man looking at me.

What is there on earth that could be put into the balance with my joy at that moment?

"You see, madame, I have children, too," said the old man, taking the alms I gave him, without even looking at them.

When I reflect that I must soon put a child like Armand to school, that I have only three and a half years more to keep him with me, I cannot help trembling. A public school will mow down the flowers of this blessed childhood; it will *denaturalize* those graces, crush that adorable frankness! They will cut the pretty curls I have so bathed and cleaned and kissed. But what will they do with Armand's soul?

Enough! let me turn to you. What has become of you? You tell me nothing of your life. Do you love Felipe as before? As for the Saracen himself, I am not uneasy about his love. Adieu; Naïs has just tumbled down; if I wished to continue that drama this letter would be a volume.

XLVI.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

CHANTEPLEURS, 1829.

THE newspapers will have told you, my good and tender Renée, of the terrible misfortune which has befallen me. I could not write to you. I remained at his bedside for twenty nights and days; I closed his eyes; I watched his body with the priests; I said the prayers for the dead. I inflicted upon myself the chastisement of these awful sufferings; and yet, when I saw upon those lips serene the smile he gave me just before he died I could not believe that my love had killed him. But he *is not,* and I, *I am!* To you who knew us both what can I tell you more? All is in those two sentences.

Oh! if any one would tell me he could be recalled to life, I would give my hopes of heaven to hear the words — for I should see him! To clasp him once

would let me breathe, if only for a single instant, without this dagger in my heart.

Will you not come and tell me that? Do you not love me enough to deceive me? But, no, no! you told me beforehand that I was cruelly injuring him. Was it true? Yes, I did not deserve his love; you were right; I stole it. Happiness! I choked it in my mad embrace. Oh! writing to you now, I am not mad, but I feel myself alone. O God, what is there in thy hell beyond that word?

When they took him from me I laid myself down in his bed, hoping to die there; for there was but a door between us, and I thought I had power to open it. But alas! I was too young; and after an illness of forty days, during which they fed me with those frightful appliances of a dreary science, I was brought to Chantepleurs, where I now am, sitting at my window, among the flowers he planted for me, before that glorious view on which his eyes so often wandered rejoicing in the thought that he had discovered it — because it pleased me! Ah, dearest, the pain of changing one's abode when the heart is dead is dreadful. The damp soil of my garden makes me shudder; the earth is like a vast grave, and I fancy I am walking over *him.* When I first went out I was afraid of it, and stood motionless. Oh, it is so dreary to see *his* flowers without *him.*

My mother and father are both in Spain; you know what my brothers are; and you yourself are obliged to stay at La Crampade; but do not be uneasy, two angels have come to me. The Duc and Duchesse de Soria, those dear beings, came instantly to their brother. During the last nights our three griefs were calm and silent around the bed where one of those rare men who are truly noble, truly grand, and superior to us in all things, lay dying. His patience was divine. The sight of his brother and Marie revived his soul for a moment and calmed his sufferings.

"Dear," he said to me, with that simplicity he showed in all things, "I was about to die forgetting to give Fernando the barony of Macumer. I must make another will. My brother will forgive this want of thought, for he knows what it is to love."

I owe my life to the care of my brother-in-law and his wife; they want to take me back with them to Spain.

Ah! Renée, to you alone can I tell the whole truth of this disaster. The sense of my wrong-doing crushes me; it is a bitter consolation to confess it to you, — poor, unheeded Cassandra! I killed him by my exactions, my groundless jealousies, my perpetual controversies. My love was the more terrible in its effects because we both had the same extreme sensitiveness; we spoke the same soul language; he felt everything

intensely, and often my jesting, unawares to me, cut him to the heart. You cannot imagine to what lengths that dear slave carried his obedience. Sometimes I would tell him to go away and leave me alone, and he would go without discussing a caprice from which, perhaps, he suffered. To his last breath he blessed me; repeating that a single morning alone with me was more to him than a long life with any other beloved woman, were it even Marie Heredia. I weep as I write these words.

I rise at mid-day, I go to bed at seven in the evening, I spend an unconscionable time at my meals, I walk slowly, I stop an hour before some plant, I gaze at the foliage, I busy myself deliberately and gravely about trifles, I love shade and silence and the darkness, I struggle through the hours and add them one by one with gloomy pleasure to the past. The quiet of my park is the only companionship I wish for; there I find the glorious images of my buried happiness, invisible to others, living and eloquent to me.

My sister-in-law flung herself into my arms when I said to her one morning: —

"I cannot endure your presence any longer! Spaniards have something grander than we have in their souls!"

Ah! Renée, if I am not dead it is that God no doubt apportions our sense of misery to our strength.

None but women know the extent of our loss when we lose a love without one taint of hypocrisy, the love of our choice, a lasting passion whose pleasures satisfied both soul and nature. How often is it granted to women to meet a man with such high qualities that they can love him and not degrade themselves? To meet him is the greatest joy that can come to women; it can come to them only once. Men truly great and strong, you in whom virtue hides beneath poesy, you whose souls possess a lofty charm, men made to be adored, keep yourselves from loving, or you will cause the misery of a woman and your own!

That is what I cry aloud in my wood-paths. And no child by him! That unquenchable love that smiled upon me ever, a love that showered only flowers and bliss upon me, that love to be barren! I am an accursed creature. Must love, pure and violent as it is when absolute, be as unfruitful as aversion, — just as the heated sands of the desert and the frozen region of the pole produce no life? Must one marry a de l'Estorade to have a family? Is God displeased with love? Oh! what am I saying?

You are the only being I can endure beside me. Come to me; you alone should be with your Louise in mourning. What a horrible day that was when I put a widow's cap upon my head! When I saw myself in black, the emblem of my life, I fell upon a seat and

wept till night. I weep still as I tell you of that moment.

Adieu; writing fatigues me. I am weary of my thoughts; I cannot any longer express them. Bring your children; you can nurse the last one here. There is no jealousy now; *he* is gone, and my godson will be a pleasure to me; Felipe longed for a child which should be like our little Armand. Yes, Renée, come and take your share in my grief.

XLVII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

1829.

Dearest, when you hold this letter in your hand I shall not be far off, for I start almost directly after dispatching it. We shall be alone. Louis is obliged to remain in Provence on account of the elections which are about to take place; he wants to be re-elected, and schemes are already laid against him by the liberals.

I do not come to console you; I bring only my heart to bear company with yours and help you, if I can, to live. I come to bid you weep; thus you will buy the happiness of rejoining him; he is only gone to God, and every step you take will lead you to him; each duty

done shortens by one link the chain that parts you. Ah! my Louise, you will yet arise and go to him, pure and noble, — forgiven for your involuntary faults, and followed by the works that you will do in his name here below.

I write these lines in haste in the midst of preparations; Armand is crying out: "Godmother! godmother! we are going to see her!" He makes me jealous; he is half your son.

SECOND PART.

XLVIII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

October 15, 1833.

Well, yes, Renée, they have told you the truth, or partly the truth. I have sold my house in Paris, I have sold Chantepleurs and the farms in the Seine-et-Marne; but I am not crazy, and not ruined; as I will show you in figures.

After that fatal blow which broke the mainspring of my life, I possessed the fortune of my poor Macumer, — some twelve hundred thousand francs. I shall now render you, as a trusted sister, a faithful account of it. I put a million into the Three-per-cents when they were at fifty, and I thus gained an income of sixty thousand francs instead of thirty thousand, which was all I could get from landed property. To spend six months of the year in the country, looking after leases, listening to the complaints of farmers (who will pay their rents only when they choose); to be bored to death, like a sportsman, on rainy days; to have crops to sell

and let them go at a loss; to live in Paris in a house that represents ten thousand francs a year; to keep my funds with a notary, and worry about interest; to sue people who don't pay, and study the law of mortgages, — in short, to have business matters in Nivernais, Seine-et-Marne, and Paris, — what a burden, what a bore, and above all, what mistakes and losses would result for a widow only twenty-seven years old!

Now my fortune is secured on the budget. Instead of paying taxes to the State, I receive from it, without costs, thirty thousand francs every six months, paid at the Treasury by a smiling little clerk, who gives me thirty bank-notes of a thousand francs each. "Suppose France becomes bankrupt?" I hear you say. In the first place, I never take woes ahead. But even so, France could only cut off half my income; I should be as well-off as I was before I made the investment. Such catastrophes happen only once in a century, and that leaves me plenty of time to make another fortune by economy. Besides, is n't the Comte de l'Estorade a peer of the semi-republican France of July? Is n't he one of the supporters of the crown offered by the *people* to the King of the French? Need I be anxious when I have for my friend a president of the Cour des Comptes?

Who dares say now that I am crazy? I can calculate almost as well as your citizen-king. But do you know what gives algebraic wisdom to a woman? — Love.

Alas! the moment has come when I must explain to you the mysteries of my conduct, the motives of which have eluded your perspicacity, your inquisitive affection, and your cleverness. I am about to be married, privately, in a village near Paris. I love, and I am loved. I love as much as a woman who knows what love is can love. I am loved as much as a man should love the woman who adores him.

Forgive me, Renée, for concealing the truth from you as well as from all the world. If your Louise has deceived all eyes and misled all inquiry, you, at least, will admit that my passion for my poor Macumer demanded that secrecy. Besides, you and l'Estorade would have harassed me with doubts, bewildered me with remonstrances. Even circumstances might have helped you. You alone know the point to which I can be jealous, and you might have uselessly tortured me.

What you will now call my folly, Renée, I was determined to do alone, out of my own head, my own heart, like a young girl who escapes the watchfulness of her parents. My lover's fortune is thirty thousand francs' worth of debts, which I have paid. What a topic for your remarks! You would have proved to me that Gaston was a sharper, and your husband would have spied upon him. I preferred to do the spying myself.

It is now twenty-two months since he first courted

me. I am twenty-seven, he is twenty-three. Between a woman who is the elder and a man, this difference is enormous. Another cause, you would say, of unhappiness! Also he is a poet, and lives by his work, — which is as good as telling you he lives on next to nothing. This dear lizard of a poet is oftener in the sun, building his castles in the air, than in his underground lair writing poems. Writers, artists, all those who exist by thought only, are usually taxed with inconstancy by practical persons. They espouse and conceive so many fancies that it is natural to suppose that their heads react upon their hearts.

But, in spite of the paid debts, in spite of the difference of age, in spite of the poesy, after nine months of a gallant struggle, and without so much as having let him kiss my hand — after the purest and most delicious courtship, I give myself; I do not yield myself passively as I did eight years ago, ignorant and inexperienced; I *give* myself, and the gift is accepted with such submission that I might even delay another year before the marriage takes place. But there is not the least servility in this; there is deference in it, but not submission. Never did I meet a nobler heart, nor more of strength in tenderness, nor more of soul in love than in my beloved. Alas! my Renée, it comes to him by nature. Let me tell you his history in two words.

My lover has no other name than that of Marie Gaston. He is the natural son of that beautiful Lady Brandon, of whom you must have heard, who died near Tours, at La Grénadière, killed by grief caused by the vengeance of Lady Dudley, — a horrible history, of which her son knows nothing. Marie Gaston was placed by his brother Louis Gaston at school in Tours, where he stayed till 1827. Soon after placing him there his brother went to sea to seek his fortune; so an old woman who has been Marie's Providence assured him. Louis, then in the navy, wrote to him from different ports letters that were truly fatherly, — the letters of a noble soul; but he never returned to France. In his last letter he told Marie Gaston of his promotion to the rank of post-captain in some American republic, I don't remember which, and exhorted him to hope. Alas! for three years my poor poet has received no further letter, and he loves his brother so much that he wanted at first to go in search of him. But our great writer, Daniel d'Arthèz, has prevented such folly, and has interested himself deeply in Marie Gaston, to whom he has often given, as my poet says in his picturesque language, "the bite and sup."

Judge, now, of the lad's distress; he imagined that genius was the surest and most rapid means of fortune! That will surely make you laugh for twenty-four hours. From 1828 to 1833 he has been trying to win for himself

a name in letters, and he has consequently led a most frightful life of anguish, hope, toil, and starvation. Led on by his extreme ambition, against the wiser counsels of his friend d'Arthèz, he only managed to roll up the snowball of his debts. His name was beginning to be known when I chanced to meet him at Madame d'Espard's. There, without a thought of such a thing entering his mind, I felt drawn to love him, sympathetically, at first sight. Why has no one loved him already? Why is he left for me? I asked myself. Oh, he has genius and intellect, heart and pride, — it must be that women are afraid of greatness so complete! Did it not take a hundred victories to show Josephine a Napoleon in the little Bonaparte, her husband?

His innocent heart thinks it knows how much I love him! Poor Gaston! he has no conception of it. But to you I will tell it; you ought to know it, for, Renée, this letter is, as it were, my will and testament. Meditate on what I say.

At this moment I have the certainty of being loved as much as a woman can be loved upon this earth; and I have faith in this conjugal life to which I bring a love I never felt before. Yes, I know at last the pleasure of returning a passion. What all women ask of love, marriage will give me. I feel for Gaston the passion I inspired in my poor Felipe. I am no longer mistress of myself; I tremble before that child as Felipe

trembled before me. In short, I love more than I am loved; I am afraid of everything; my fears are ridiculous; I fear to be deserted; I tremble lest I be old and ugly while Gaston is still young and handsome; I tremble at the thought that I may not please him always. And yet I think I possess the faculties, the devotion, the sense necessary, not to preserve only, but also to nurture and increase his love, if far from the world, in solitude. That is my dream.

If I fail, if the magnificent poem of this secret love should have an end — what am I saying, an *end!* — nay, if Gaston loves me one day less than the day before, and I perceive it, Renée, remember, I shall blame myself, not him. It will not be his fault; it will be mine. I know myself. I am more of a loving woman than a mother; and I tell you in advance that if this happened to me I should die, even though I might have children. And before I enter into these new bonds, my Renée, I implore you, should any evil come to me, to be a mother to my children; I here bequeath them to you. The knowledge of your fanaticism for duty, your precious qualities, your love for children, your love for me, — *all* that I know of you will render death less bitter; I dare not say more sweet.

This fixed idea within my mind adds a nameless terror to the ceremony of this marriage; that is why I cannot have those who know me witness it; it will be

solemnized in secret. I can tremble more at ease if I do not see in your dear eyes a disquietude I cannot bear. I alone shall feel, as I sign this second register of marriage, that I may have signed my death-warrant.

I shall never speak again of the pact now made between myself and the self I am going to become. I confide it to you here, that you may know, if evil happens to me, the extent of the duty I lay upon you.

I marry free, absolutely independent as to property, and knowing that I am rich enough for us both to live at our ease, I can dispose of my fortune in what manner I choose. As I do not wish to humiliate either of us, I have placed twelve thousand francs a year in Gaston's name; he will find the first year's income in his desk the evening before our marriage, and if he does not accept them I will suspend everything. I was obliged to threaten not to marry him to obtain the right to pay his debts.

Ah! Renée, I am weary with writing to you all these confessions. Day after to-morrow I will tell you more; but to-morrow I am obliged to go into the country for the whole day.

October 20th.

I have taken measures to hide my happiness, for I desire to evade all occasions for my fatal jealousy. I am like that beautiful Italian princess who rushed to Switzerland to devour her prey after springing upon it

like a lioness. So, though I am now going to tell you of all my arrangements, I beg of you not to come and see us unless I ask you to do so; and to respect the seclusion in which I wish to live.

About two years ago I bought some twenty acres of meadow land, with a fringe of woods and a fine fruit-garden, above the ponds of Ville d'Avray, on the road to Versailles. At the lower end of the meadows the ground has been excavated so as to form a pond about three acres in extent, in the middle of which is an island gracefully outlined. Two pretty wooded hills close in this valley and send delicious little brooks to filter through my park, where they have been judiciously distributed by my architect. These waters fall into the ponds on the crown lands which can be seen through an opening in the trees. The park, admirably laid out by the same architect, is, according to the nature of the land, enclosed by hedges, walls, and sunken fences, so that no point of view is lost. Half way up the slope, at a spot flanked by the woods of La Ronce, with a delightful prospect, facing a meadow running down to the pond, I have built a chalet, the exterior of which exactly reproduces that on the road from Sion to Brieg which so delighted me on our way back from Italy. Within, its elegance surpasses that of all the famous chalets.

About a hundred yards from this rustic dwelling is

a charming construction which groups together the kitchen, offices, stables, and coach-houses, and communicates with the Chalet by an underground way. Of all these various buildings, made of brick, the eye sees only a façade of graceful simplicity, surrounded by shrubs and trees. The gardener's house is another ornamental building, which masks the entrance to the orchard and kitchen-gardens.

The entrance gate to this property, in the wall on the woodland side, is almost undiscoverable. The plantations, already of some height, will completely hide the buildings in a few years; my idea of retirement will be completely carried out; passers along the roads will know of our abode only by the smoke rising above the trees in summer, or in winter when the leaves have fallen.

The Chalet stands in the midst of grounds designed after those they call the "King's Garden" at Versailles; but it has, in addition, a view of my pond and island. On all sides the hill-slopes show their foliage, the foliage of the fine trees now so cared for by the new Civil list. My gardeners have orders to cultivate only the sweetest-smelling flowers, and those by thousands; so that this little corner of the earth will be a perfumed emerald. The Chalet, adorned with a wild grape-vine which clambers over the roof, is literally swathed in climbing plants, clematis, jasmine, hop, and cobea. He

who can distinguish our windows amid their luxuriance may boast of having seen a rare sight!

This chalet, my dear, is a good and fine house, with its *calorifères* and all the improvements introduced by modern architecture, — which nowadays builds palaces on a hundred square feet of ground. It contains a suite of rooms for Gaston and a suite of rooms for me. The ground-floor is occupied by an antechamber, a parlor, and a dining-room. Above us are three rooms destined for the *nursery*. I have five superb horses, a little coupé, very light, and a *milord* for two horses. We are less than forty minutes from Paris; and if we want to hear an opera, or see a new piece at the theatres, we have only to drive in after dinner and return to our nest at night. The road is fine and runs under the shadow of our own woods for some distance.

My servants, the cook, coachman, groom, gardeners, and the lady's-maid are all worthy persons, who will be under the direction of my good old Philippe. Though I think I may be sure of their discretion, I hold them partly by their interests; their wages are small, with the promise of an increase each year by a new-year's gift. They all know that the slightest fault, or the mere suspicion of their being indiscreet, would cause them to lose immense advantages. Loving persons never worry their servants, — they are indulgent; and so I think I may rely on my people.

All that was precious, and beautiful, and elegant in my house in the rue du Bac, is now in the Chalet. The Rembrandt (which is neither more nor less than a daub) is on the staircase; the Hobbema is in *his* study, opposite to the Rubens; the Titian which my sister-in-law sent me from Madrid, adorns the boudoir; those beautiful pieces of furniture Felipe found look well in the parlor, which the architect has decorated exquisitely. Everything about the Chalet is charming, — simple with the simplicity that costs a fortune. The ground-floor, being built over a cellar with stone foundation-walls laid in cement, and scarcely visible behind the plants and shrubs, is delightfully cool but never damp. A flock of white swans are floating on the pond at the foot of the lawn.

Oh, Renée! a silence to rejoice the dead reigns in this valley. We shall be wakened by the song of birds, or the shivering of the poplars to the breeze. A little brook comes down the hillside and runs to the pond over silvery sands between banks of water-cress; I don't know that any money could have bought that! But oh! will Gaston think these charms are too complete and so dislike them? All is so beautiful that I tremble at it; worms are in the finest fruits, insects attack the loveliest flowers! It is always the pride of the forest those horrible brown larvæ gnaw with a voracity like that of death. I know already by experi-

ence that an invisible and jealous power undermines all perfect felicity. How many times you have told me so! You were a prophet.

Yesterday, when I went to see if my last fancies and ideas had been thoroughly understood and carried out, tears came into my eyes at such perfection, and I wrote at the foot of the architect's account (to his great surprise) "Correct; pay at once."

"But your man of business will not pay it in that way, madame," he said. "It is a matter of three hundred thousand francs."

So I added the words "without discussion," like a true Chaulieu of the seventeenth century.

"But, monsieur," I said, "I make one condition; do not speak of these buildings or of the park to any one. No one knows me here, even by name, and I put you on your honor to observe my wishes in this respect."

Now you understand the meaning of all my sudden movements, and my secret comings and goings. You see now where my beautiful things that rumor told you were sold have gone. Will you admit the lofty reason of this change in my life? Dear, to love is a great business, and whoso would love well must have no other. I have simplified all others; money can never be a care to me now. I have made life easy; I have so arranged my household once for all that I shall have no care except perhaps for ten minutes every morning

with my major-domo, old Philippe. I have studied life and its dangerous whirlpools; death taught me one fatal day a cruel lesson, and I mean to profit by it. My sole occupation shall be to please *him*, to love *him*, and to put variety into what might seem a monotonous existence to common souls.

Gaston knows nothing of all this as yet. At my request he has made himself (and so have I) a resident of Ville d'Avray. To-morrow we start for the Chalet. Our life there will not be costly; though, if I were to tell you the sum at which I estimate my toilet you would say, and not without reason, "She is mad!" I wish to adorn myself for him, every day, as other women adorn themselves for society. My toilet in this country solitude will therefore cost, for the whole year, twenty-four thousand francs. *He* may wear blouses if he likes. Don't think I mean to make this life a duel, and to exhaust myself in efforts and contrivances to retain love; no, but I will not leave anything unguarded for which I could blame myself, that is all. I have thirteen years still before me in which to be a pretty woman; I wish to be loved to the last day of the thirteenth year even more than I shall be on the morrow of my mysterious marriage. *This time* I will be humble, grateful; no caustic word shall escape me; I will make myself a servant, — for power and command it was that ruined me that first time.

Oh, Renée! if, like me, Gaston has understood the infinitude of love I am certain of living ever happy. Nature is so lovely around the Chalet; the woods are ravishing. At every turn a dewy landscape, or woodland scenes which refresh the soul with their sweet ideas. These woods are full of love. God grant I may not have made myself a pyre with them! To-morrow I shall be Madame Gaston. I ask my soul if it is Christian to love a man so much.

"It is legal," said my notary (who is to be my witness to-morrow) referring to the liquidation of my property; and then he added: "But I lose a client." And you, my beautiful Renée, — I dare not still say my dearest, — you may well say: "I lose a sister."

Address your letters in future to "Madame Gaston, poste restante, Versailles." We shall send there for our letters every day; and all our provisions are to come from Paris; so I hope we shall be able to live in absolute retirement. During the year the place has been preparing no one has set foot there; the purchase was made during the public excitement which followed the revolution of July, and it thus escaped notice.

Adieu. In writing that word I have as much pain as I have pleasure in my heart; does not that mean that I regret you as profoundly as I love Gaston?

XLIX.

M. MARIE GASTON TO M. DANIEL D'ARTHÈZ.

October, 1833.

My dear Daniel, — I want two witnesses for my marriage, and I beg you to come to me to-morrow evening and bring with you our friend, the good and great Joseph Bridau. The intention of the lady who will be my wife is to live remote from society, in perfect solitude; in this she has foreseen my most ardent wishes. You have known nothing of my love, — you who softened the woes of my poverty-stricken life, — but I know you will feel that this secrecy must have been a necessity. This is why, for the last year, you have seen me so seldom. After my marriage we shall be separated for a long time. Daniel, you have a soul able to understand me; friendship cannot exist without the friend. Perhaps I shall sometimes feel the need of you, but I cannot see you, in my own house at least. In this respect *She* has gone even beyond my desires. She has sacrificed to me and to our solitude the friend of her childhood, who has been a true sister to her; in return I immolate my friend.

All this will make you perceive, not a passion, but a true love, — complete, divine, founded on an intimate knowledge between two beings who link themselves

together. My happiness is pure, and it is infinite; but as some secret law forbids us to enjoy unmingled happiness, there lurks in the depths of my heart a thought which troubles me alone, for she knows nothing of it. You know the dreadful situation I was once in, for you have often helped me in it. Where and how did I get courage to live when hope was overthrown so often? From your past life, my friend, — from you, in whom I found such true consolation, such delicate relief. But now, *She* has paid my crushing debts. She is rich, and I have nothing. How often have I said in my lazy moments, "Ah! if any rich woman would only take a fancy to me!" Well, in presence of that accomplished fact, the heedless jest of the boy, the actual scheme of many an unscrupulous pauper, takes another aspect; I am humiliated in spite of the nobility of her soul — of which I am sure. Moreover, she has seen that I did not recoil from that abasement. A point is reached where, instead of being a protector, I am the protected one.

I confide that suffering to you, my dear Daniel, but outside of that point, let me hasten to say, all things are far beyond my dreams. I have found the Beautiful without a flaw, the Good without defect. As the saying is, the bride is too enchanting; she has intelligence in her tenderness, and the charm and grace which give variety to love; she is educated and under-

stands all topics; she is pretty, fair, and lithe, but plump as well; one might say that Raffaelle and Rubens had conspired to produce such a woman. I don't know if it would have been possible for me to love a dark woman as much as a fair one; for dark women always seem to me half boys. She is a widow, and has no children. Though eager, alert, and indefatigable, she nevertheless finds pleasure in melancholy meditations. These diverse gifts do not exclude in her either dignity or nobility of manner; she is imposing. Though she belongs to one of the oldest of our noble families, she loves me enough to overlook the misfortunes of my birth.

Our secret love has lasted long; we have tested one-another thoroughly; we are each jealous; our thoughts are like two flashes from one thunderclap; we both love for the first time; and this delicious spring-time holds in its joys all that imagination can conceive of happiness. Each day is full to overflowing, and when we part we write poems to each other. I have never once thought of tarnishing this beautiful season of our love with desires, though my soul is filled with them. She was a widow and free, and she has thoroughly understood the flattery of this restraint; she is sometimes touched to tears. You will see in her to-morrow, my dear Daniel, a really superior being. Not a kiss of love has there been between us; we have mutually been in awe of one another.

"We have each," she said to me, "a grievous thing in our lives to overlook."

"I do not see yours."

"My marriage," she answered.

You, who are a great man, and who love one of the most distinguished women in that aristocratic world in which I found my Armande, will comprehend that speech; it will suffice you to understand her soul, and what will be the happiness of

Your friend,

MARIE GASTON.

L.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

OH, Louise, can it be that after all your experience of the misfortunes of exclusive love, you mean to bury yourself with a husband in solitude? After declaring that you killed one by exactions in the world, do you really mean to live apart from the world to devour another? What griefs you are preparing for yourself! But from the way you have set about the matter I see it is irrevocable. A man who has made you overcome your aversion to second marriages must be angelic in mind and divine in heart; and I ought, therefore, not to meddle with your illusions. You are happy in your belief in happiness, and I have not the heart to blame

you, though the instinct of my tenderness would have made me try to turn you from this marriage, had I known of it in time. Yes, a hundred times yes, nature and society combine to destroy the existence of unalloyed happiness; because such happiness runs counter to nature and society, — perhaps, too, heaven is jealous of its rights. At any rate, if you persist in burying yourself with your love, and living exclusively for that, my friendship foresees some misfortune, the nature of which I am unable to prophesy, not knowing whence it may come nor what will give birth to it. Besides, dearest, I am sure so vast and boundless a happiness will be too much for you to bear indefinitely; excessive joy is even more exhausting than the heaviest burden. I don't say anything against *him;* you love him, and that's enough; but I do hope you will write to me, some day when you have nothing to do, and give me a full description of this beautiful and rare "animal."

You see I take the matter gayly; the fact is, I feel certain that when the honeymoon is well over you will both with one accord settle down, and do as other people do. Some day, say two years hence, when you and I are driving together on the road to Versailles, you will say to me: "There's the chalet I said I would never leave!" and then you'll laugh your own good laugh, and show all your pretty teeth.

I have not told Louis as yet; and I shall not tell him

all, for I am afraid it would make him laugh. I shall simply tell him of your marriage and your wish to keep it secret for the present. Here it is October; you are a brave woman to face the winter in the country; if it did not concern marriage I should say you were taking the bull by the horns. Rest assured that you have in me a friend who will be both discreet and intelligent. The mysterious centre of Africa has swallowed up many a traveller, and it seems to me that, in the matter of sentiment, you are rushing into a journey like that of so many explorers who have lost their lives either through the natives or the burning sands. Happily, your Africa is only six miles from Paris, so I gayly say to you: "Bon voyage! we shall see you back soon."

LI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

PARIS, 1835.

WHAT has become of you, dear Louise? After a silence of two years surely your Renée has a right to make inquiries. Is this love? Does it necessitate the annulling of a friendship like ours? Admit that if I adore my children even more than you love your Gaston, there is in that maternal sentiment a breadth and grandeur

which does not allow of depriving other affections of their due, but, on the contrary, leaves a woman free to be a sincere and devoted friend. Your letters, your dear sweet face, are sorely lacking to me. I am reduced to conjectures about you. Oh, Louise!

As for ourselves, I will run over our events as succinctly as possible.

In re-reading your last letter but one I was struck with a few sharp words about our political position. You twitted us with having kept the presidency of the Cour des Comptes, which, as you observed, we hold, together with the title of count, through the favor of Charles X. But if we had only our patrimonial income to depend upon how could I, with only forty thousand francs a year (thirty of which are entailed with the property), — how could I establish Athénaïs and my poor little "pauper" René? Ought we not to live on the salary of the post, and lay by the income from the estate? In twenty years we can amass nearly six hundred thousand francs, which will serve to dower my daughter and provide for René, whom I mean to put into the navy. The little pauper will thus have ten thousand francs a year, and possibly we might be able to leave him a sum in hand equal to his sister's portion. When he is a post-captain he will be able to marry a rich girl and perhaps hold as good a position in the world as his elder brother.

These sage calculations made us resolve in our own minds to accept the new order of things. Naturally, the new dynasty in return made Louis a peer of France and a grand officer of the Legion of honor. As soon as l'Estorade took the oaths, he could not, and ought not to do the thing by halves; from that time therefore he has rendered great services in the Chamber. He has now reached a position in which he can tranquilly remain to the end of his days. He has dexterity in public business; he is more of a debater than an orator, but that is all that is needed of him. His shrewdness, and his sound knowledge, both in questions of government policy and in matters of administration, are appreciated, and all parties now regard him as an indispensable man. I may tell you privately that an embassy was lately offered to him; but I made him decline it. The education of Armand, who is now thirteen, and Athénaïs, who is nearly eleven, keeps me in Paris, and I want to stay here till my little René has finished his, which is only beginning.

To continue faithful to the Elder Branch and live on the estate would not have enabled me to educate my children and provide for the two youngest. A mother, my dearest, can't be a Decius, — especially in times when Deciuses are rare. Fifteen years from now l'Estorade can retire to La Crampade with a handsome pension, after installing Armand as referendary in the Cour des

Comptes. As for René, the navy will no doubt lead him into diplomacy; at seven years old the little monkey is as shrewd as an old cardinal.

Ah! Louise, I am a very happy mother. My children continue to give me joys without a cloud, — *Senza brama, sicura ricchezza.* Armand is in the Collège Henri IV. I decided on public education without being able to bring myself to a total separation from him; I did therefore as the Duc d'Orléans did before becoming — possibly in order to be — Louis Philippe. Every morning Lucas (the old servant, whom you will remember) takes Armand to school, and fetches him at half-past four in the afternoon. An old and excellent tutor who lives in our house makes him learn his lessons at night, and wakes him in the morning in time for school. Lucas takes him his lunch during the recreation. Thus I see him at dinner, and in the evening before he goes to bed, and I always see him off in the morning. He is the same charming child, full of heart and devotion, whom you loved; his tutor is satisfied with him. I have my Naïs and the little one with me; they keep up an incessant buzzing, but I am just as much of a child as they. I could not force myself to give up my dear children's presence and caresses. I can now rush to Armand's bed, if I so please, and look at him as he sleeps; and, to tell the truth, to take and give a kiss to that angel is a necessity of my existence.

Still, the system of keeping children at home has its disadvantages; I fully recognize them. Society, like nature, is jealous, and will not allow her laws to be infringed upon; she does not choose to have her system of economy upset. Therefore, in those families where children are kept at home they are too early exposed to the fire of the world, they see its passions and its dissimulations. Incapable of even guessing the distinctions which guide the conduct of grown persons, they subject life to their feelings and passions, instead of subjecting their desires and requirements to the world. Children are soon taken by false brilliancy, which shines very much more in society than solid virtues; for it is *appearances*, above all, which society brings to the front, and clothes in lying garments. When a lad of fifteen assumes the assurance of a man who knows the world, he is a monstrosity; he is an old man at twenty-five, and renders himself by that precocious knowledge incapable of the solid studies on which real and serious talents rest. The world is a great comedian, and, like a comedian, it receives and returns all; it keeps nothing. A mother therefore *must*, if she keeps her children at home, make a firm resolution not to allow them to enter the world; she must have the courage to oppose their desires, and her own, in this matter. Cornelia kept her jewels in their casket; and so shall I, for my children are my life.

I am thirty years old, and the heat of the day is over, the hardest part of the journey done. In a few years I shall be an old woman, and I shall find immense strength in the feeling of having done my duty. One would really think my three dear beings understood this thought of mine and conformed to it. There exist between them (who have never left my side) and me mysterious relations. They shower enjoyments upon me as if they knew all that they owe me in the way of compensation.

Armand, who for the first three years of his studies, was heavy, meditative, and caused me some anxiety, suddenly took a start. No doubt he began to perceive the object of preparatory studies, which children do not always see, and which is, in fact, to train them to study, to sharpen their intelligence, and mould them to obedience, — the mainspring of society. My dear, a few days ago I had the intoxicating sensation of seeing Armand before a great audience at the Sorbonne. At the distribution of prizes at the Collège Henri IV. he obtained two first prizes, that for verses and that for theme. I turned white when I heard his name called, and I longed to cry out, "I am his mother!" Naïs squeezed my hand till she hurt me, if indeed I could feel anything at such a moment. Ah! Louise, that grand day was better than all the lost loves in the world.

The triumphs of his brother have spurred on my little René, who wants to go to school like his elder. Sometimes the three children shout and rush about the house and make a racket fit to split one's head. I am sure I don't know how I bear it, for I am always there. I have never left to any one, not even to Mary, the responsibility of watching over them. But there are so many joys to garner in this dear business of motherhood! To see a child leave its play just to run up and kiss you, as if driven by a need — oh! what joy! We can observe them best in their freest moments, for one of a mother's chief duties is to distinguish from the earliest years the aptitudes and character and vocation of her children. All children brought up by their mothers have a knowledge of customs and ways of life which serves as a substitute for natural intelligence, whereas natural intelligence never takes the place of what men learn from their mothers. I recognize these shades of difference in the men I meet in salons, where I can detect instantly the traces of a woman in the manners of a young man. How therefore can women deprive their sons of such an advantage? So, you see, my duties, if accomplished, are fruitful of treasures and joys.

Armand, I am convinced, will make an honest and upright public man, the most conscientious deputy that could be found anywhere; whereas my René will

be the boldest, most adventurous, and at the same time the wiliest of sailors. The little scamp has an iron will; he gets everything he wants, and he makes a thousand twists and turns to reach his end; if a thousand won't do it he invents a thousand and one, or more, until he does reach it. Where my dear Armand would resign himself calmly and see the reason of things, René storms, strives, plans, — haranguing all the time, — and ends by finding a crack of vantage; if he can get but the point of his knife into it he presently drives through in his little chariot.

As for Naïs, she is so much myself that I hardly distinguish her flesh from mine. Ah! the darling! the dear little girl! whom I love to make dainty and sweet; whose hair I braid, in whose curls I put my thoughts of love. I want her to be happy; I will give her to no man whom she does not love and who will not love her. But — oh, my God! sometimes when I am decking my darling with ribbons in her hair, or tying the shoes on her dainty little feet, a thought darts into my heart and head which turns me faint. Who is mistress of the fate of a daughter? Perhaps she will love a man unworthy of her; perhaps she will not be loved by him she loves. Often when I am watching her the tears come into my eyes. To part with a charming creature, a flower, a rose which has lived in our bosom like a bud on a rose-bush, and give her to a

man who deprives us of all! It is thinking of you, you who for two years have not written me even the three words "I am happy," which has brought into my mind the drama of marriage, dreadful to every mother who is a mother indeed.

Adieu! I don't know why I write to you, for you don't deserve my friendship. Oh, answer me, my own Louise!

LII.

MADAME GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

THE CHALET.

A SILENCE of two years excites your curiosity, and you want to know why I have not written; but, my dear Renée, there are no words nor signs nor language in which to express my happiness; our souls have the strength to sustain it, — there, in two words, is all I can tell you.

We have made not the slightest effort to be happy. We understand each other in all things; in two years there has never been a jarring note in our concert, not a discord in our feelings, not the faintest difference in our wills. In short, my dearest, there is no day which does not bring its own especial fruit, no moment that fancy does not render delightful. Not only are we sure that our life can never be monotonous, but we fear

sometimes it cannot be long enough for all the poesies of our love, which is fruitful as Nature, and as varied as she.

No, we have not found a single disappointment! We please each other better, far better, than at first, and we hourly discover new reasons to love one another. Often we say to ourselves in the evening, as we are walking after dinner by our pond, that the next day we will surely go to Paris out of mere curiosity, as sight-seers, — very much as one might say: "Let us go to Switzerland."

"Ah, yes," Gaston says, "they tell me there 's a new boulevard; the Madeleine is finished; we really ought to go and see all that."

Bah! the next day we stay in bed, and breakfast in our room. Mid-day comes; the weather is warm, too warm to make an effort. He asks me to let him look at me, and he does, as if I were a picture; he buries himself in the contemplation, which, as you may fancy, is reciprocal. The tears come into our eyes; we think of our happiness, and tremble. I am always his mistress; that is to say, I seem to love him less than he loves me. That deception is delicious. There is such charm for women in seeing sentiment greater than desire, in seeing our master stop there where we wish him to remain.

You asked me to tell you what Gaston is like.

But, dear Renée, it is impossible to make a portrait of the man we love; we cannot be truthful. Besides, between ourselves, there is a singular and sad result of our manners and customs, — namely: nothing is so different as a man in society and the man who loves; the difference is so great that they do not resemble each other in any particular. He who takes the graceful attitudes of a graceful dancer to whisper in our ear at the corner of a fireplace some word of love may not have any of love's true graces such as women desire them. On the other hand, a man who seems ugly, without manners, and ill-dressed in his black cloth, may hide a lover who possesses the very spirit of love, and who will never be ridiculous in any of those positions where we ourselves, with our external airs and graces, may sometimes fail. To find in a man a mysterious harmony between what he seems to be and what he is; to meet with one who in the privacy of married life has that innate grace which cannot be acquired, — the grace that antique sculpture has displayed in the chastity of its statues, the innocence of abandonment to Nature that the ancients have put into those poems which, even in the nude, seem to our souls to be clothed with garments, — all this ideal, which springs from ourselves and belongs to the world of harmonies, and is no doubt the essence of all things, the vast problem which the imagination of all women is incessantly seeking, — well,

Gaston is the living solution of it. Ah! dearest, I never knew till now what love and youth and intellect and beauty, all united, were.

My Gaston is never affected; his grace is instinctive, it develops without effort. When we walk in the woods, his arm about my waist, mine on his shoulder, side to side, our heads touching, we move with even step and a motion so soft and uniform, that any one who saw us pass might think we were one being gliding along the paths like the Immortals of Homer. This harmony is in desire, thought, and word. Sometimes beneath the foliage still damp from a passing shower, when the grass is lustrous with the rain-drops, we have taken long walks without uttering a word, listening to the plash of water, delighting in the ruddy color which the setting sun spreads upon the tree-tops or dashes upon their old gray trunks. Surely, then our thoughts were a prayer, secret and confused, rising to heaven as an excuse for happiness. Sometimes we exclaim together at the same instant, when a sudden turn of the path shows us, afar, some delicious vista. If you knew what there is of honey and of depth in a kiss, almost a timid one, amid that holy nature! It makes one think that God made us to pray thus to him. Then we go home, loving each other better, always better. Such a love between husband and wife would seem insulting to the world of Paris; we can only indulge it, like lovers, buried in our woods.

Gaston, my dear, is of middle height, which is that of all men of energy; he is neither stout nor thin, and is very well-made; his limbs are well-rounded; he is active in his movements, he jumps a ditch with the spring of a wild animal. In any position, no matter what it is, he has an instinct in him by which he finds his equilibrium, — which is rare in men who have the habit of meditating. Though dark, as distinguished from fair, his skin is extremely white. His hair is black as jet, and produces a vigorous contrast with the dead-white tones of his throat and forehead. He has the melancholy head of Louis XIII. His moustache and *royale* are black; I have made him cut off his whiskers and beard, they have become so common. His sacred poverty kept him pure from all the stains that degrade young men. His teeth are magnificent; his health perfect. The glance of his blue eye, to me of magnetic tenderness, takes fire and gleams like a flame when his soul is troubled. Like all strong men with powerful intellects he possesses an equability of character which would surprise you as much as it surprised me.

Many women have told me of their home trials, — the instability of will and restlessness of men who are discontented with themselves; who either will not or do not know how to grow old; whose wasted youth has left them eternal regrets; whose veins are poisoned;

whose eyes have a lurking sadness; who harass others to hide their own distrusts; who avenge themselves on their wives because they cannot be agreeable themselves, and who secretly hate our merits as a reproach to their own defects, — all these trials youth knows nothing of; they are the attributes of ill-proportioned marriages.

Oh, my dear Renée, marry Athénaïs to none but a young man. If you knew how I feast on that constant smile, which is ever varied by a refined and delicate mind, — a smile which *speaks*, telling of thoughts of love and mute acknowledgment; binding past joys ever to present ones. Nothing is forgotten between us. We make the smallest things in Nature the sharers of our happiness; they are all living, they have a voice in the depths of our woods. An old mossy oak, near the keeper's house, tells us how we sat there, tired, under its shade, and Gaston explained to me the nature of mosses and told me their history, until, from fact to fact and science to science our thought rose to the ends of life. Our two minds have something so fraternal in them that I often think they are two copies of the same book. You see, I am making myself literary! We both have the habit of following out a thing to its fullest extent, of trying to perceive all there is to it, and the proofs that we constantly give ourselves of the integrity of this inner sense is a pleas-

ure that is ever new. We have come to regard this accordance of mind as an evidence of love; if it were ever to fail, the disaster would be to us what an infidelity is in other homes.

My life, full of pleasures, may nevertheless seem to you very laborious; for I must tell you, dear, that Louise-Armande-Marie de Chaulieu takes care of her own room; my religion enters into the smallest things appertaining to its worship. I do my room with all the care a girl in love will spend upon her own adornment. I 'm as fussy as an old maid. My dressing-room, instead of being chaos, is a delightful boudoir. The master, the sovereign, may enter at all hours and his eye will encounter nothing to afflict or surprise or disenchant him; flowers, perfume, elegance, all, can only charm. In the early morning, at daybreak, while he is still asleep, I go into a little dressing-room, where — wise with the experience of my mother — I remove all traces of sleep with a bath of cold water. The pores of the skin don't do their duty during sleep, the skin gets heated and clogged, and you see a sort of atmosphere upon it. But out of a sponge-bath a woman emerges like a young girl. Perhaps that explains the myth of Venus rising from the sea; I know that water gives me the sparkling freshness of the Aurora. I comb and perfume my hair; and after this minute and private toilet I slip back and appear to the master like a

spring morning. He is charmed with the freshness of the flower, though he cannot explain it. Later, my toilet for the day concerns my maid and takes place in the larger dressing-room. Thus I actually make three toilets, sometimes four, a day for Monsieur my husband.

But we have some work to do, nevertheless. We take a deep interest in our flowers, those beautiful creatures of our conservatory, and in our trees. We have made ourselves seriously botanists, and we love our flowers passionately; the Chalet is filled with them. Our lawns are always green, our groups of trees and shrubs are as carefully tended as those of the richest banker. Nothing can be more beautiful than the grounds about the house. We are extremely fastidious about our fruit, and we keep incessant watch over our hot-beds, and Montreuil peaches, our walled fruit, and our standard pears. But in case these rural occupations should not be satisfying enough for the mind of my adored, of which I have had my doubts, I advised him to finish in this perfect quiet and solitude certain plays which he began in the days of his poverty, and which are really very fine.

That sort of work is the only one in literature which can be taken up, laid aside, and returned to; it requires long reflection and does not demand the same perpetual chiselling as to style. No one can write dialogue con-

secutively. Long pauses are needed; clever strokes must be thought of, situations arranged, climaxes found, and also witty sayings, — which are only produced by the mind as the plant gives its flowers, and are, moreover, found more readily by waiting till they come to you than by search. This pursuit of ideas pleases me extremely. I have made myself Gaston's collaborator, and I never leave him now, not even when he soars away into vast regions of imagination.

Now you know how I spend my winter evenings. Our household moves so easily that we have never since our marriage had a word of reproach, not even a correction to make to our servants; they are happy and they see that their condition will not be changed except by their own fault. We allow the gardeners to sell the surplus of the fruit and vegetables. The dairy-woman does the same with the milk and cream and fresh butter. Only, of course, the best products are reserved for us. The servants are pleased with their profits, and we are enchanted with this profusion, which no fortune can procure in that dreadful Paris, where fine peaches cost, each, the revenue of a hundred francs.

All this, my dear, has a meaning. I assume to be the world to my husband; now, the world is amusing; my husband must not, therefore, be allowed to be bored in this solitude. I thought I was jealous when I was loved and allowed myself to be loved; but I know now

what the jealousy of a woman who loves really is, — that is, real jealousy. It has come to this, that if a single glance of his seems indifferent I tremble. Sometimes I say to myself, "What if he ceased to love me?" — and I shudder. Oh! I am before him as the soul of a Christian is before God.

Alas! my Renée, I still have no children. The moment will doubtless come when the feelings of a father and mother will be needed to keep us in love with this retreat; we shall both desire the little brown or blond heads, the little frocks, the pelerines skipping and running along our flowery paths and among the copses. Oh! it is unnatural, abnormal, that flowers should have no fruits! The recollection of your beautiful family assails me poignantly at times. My life — mine! — has narrowed, while yours has expanded, has shone out. Love is profoundly selfish, whereas motherhood tends to multiply all feelings. I deeply felt this difference between us when I read your good, your tender letter. Your happiness fills me with envy when I think of you living in those three hearts.

Yes! you are happy; you have wisely conformed to the laws of social life; whereas I am aloof from all. Nothing can ever console a woman for the loss of her beauty but loving and beloved children. I shall soon be thirty, and at that age a woman begins some terrible inward lamentations. I am still beautiful, but I see

the boundary of a woman's life; beyond it, what will become of me? When I am forty *he* will still be young, I shall be old. Whenever that thought enters my heart I lie at his feet and make him swear that when he feels his love diminishing he will tell me so — instantly. But he is only a child; he swears it in a tone as if his love could never diminish; and he is so beautiful that — oh, Renée, you understand? — I believe him!

Adieu, dear angel; will it again be years before we write to each other? Happiness is monotonous in its expression; perhaps it is because of that great difficulty that Dante seems to loving souls grander in the Paradiso than in the Inferno. I am not Dante, I am only your friend, and I do not want to tire you out. But you, — you must write to me, for you have in your children an ever-varying happiness and a growing one, whereas mine — but oh! why talk of it any more?

Adieu; I send you a thousand tender thoughts.

LIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

My dear Louise, — I have read and reread your letter and the more it penetrates my mind, the more I feel that you are less a woman than a child. You have

not changed ; you forget what I have told you a thousand times ; namely, that the passion of Love is a theft committed by the social state from the natural state ; it is so transient in nature that the resources of society cannot change its primitive condition. Therefore all noble souls have endeavored to dignify that passion, to make a man of that child ; but then Love becomes, you say, an anomaly.

Society desires to be fruitful. By substituting lasting sentiments for the transient joys of nature it has created the grandest of all human things,— the Family, eternal base of all society. To this it sacrifices the man as well as the woman ; for, let us not mislead ourselves, the father of a family gives his activity, his powers, all his fortunes to his wife. It is the wife who profits by these sacrifices. Luxury, wealth, are mostly for her ; for her the glory and elegance, the flower and sweetness of the home. Oh, my angel, you are once more taking life amiss. To be worshipped is the theory of the young girl, good for the spring-tide of life, but not that of the woman who is a wife and a mother.

Perhaps it is enough for a woman's self-love to know that she can make herself adored. If you wish to be a wife and a mother be satisfied with that knowledge and return to Paris. Let me tell you again and yet again that you will lose through happiness what others lose through unhappiness. Listen to me, my child ;

even if I could be loved by a man for whom I felt in me the love you feel for Gaston, I still would hold to my dear duty, to my sweet family. Motherhood is to the heart of a woman one of those simple, natural, fruitful, inexhaustible things that are like the very elements of life. I remember how one day, now fourteen years ago, I clasped self-devotion as a drowning man clings to the mast of his vessel, in despair; but to-day, when I evoke the memory of all my past before me, I choose once more that motive as the principle of my life; for it is the safest and the most fruitful of all. The knowledge of your life, which is based, oh! dear Louise, on a passionate egotism, has strengthened my resolution. I will never tell you all these things again; but I ought to tell them to you once more and for the last time because I see that you are putting your happiness to a most terrible trial.

I have reflected deeply over your life in the country, and another observation comes into my mind which I think I ought to tell you. Life is made up, both for heart and body, of certain regular movements. All excess brought into the mechanism is a cause of pleasure or of pain; now pleasure, or pain, is a fever of the soul which is essentially transient, because neither can be long borne. To make one's life an excess, is n't that making it a life of illness? You are *ill*, so long as you maintain at the level of passion an emotion which

ought to become in marriage a pure and equable power. Yes, my angel, to-day I know it, the glory of a home is in that calm existence, that deep and mutual comprehension, that communion of joys and trials for which it is sometimes laughed at. Oh! how grand was that saying of the Duchesse de Sully, the wife of the great Sully, when they told her that her husband, grave as he seemed, did not scruple to have a mistress: "That is explainable," she answered. "I am the honor of the house. I should be very sorry to play the part of a courtesan."

My Louise, you, who are more passionate than tender, you wish to be the wife and mistress too. With the soul of Héloïse and the senses of Saint Teresa, you give yourself wholly up to a disorder sanctioned by the laws; in other words, you deprave the institution of marriage. Yes, you, who judged me so severely when I seemed immoral in accepting from the day of my marriage the means of happiness within my reach, you deserve to-day the reproach you made me then. You want to bend nature and society to the service of your passion. You remain what you were; you are not transforming yourself into what a woman should be. You are retaining the wishes and the will and exactions of a young girl. I might call your passion calculating. Are you not selling your adornments for a price? Behind all those preparations and

precautions, I think I see you are distrustful. Oh! dear Louise, if you did but know the sweetness of the labor women do in making themselves good and tender to their family. The independence of my character took its rise in that early sadness which maternal pleasures dissipated, and now the joys of family are my recompense. If the morning was difficult, the evening will be pure and serene. I fear it may be otherwise with your life. As I finished reading your letter I prayed to God to convert you to the family; to make you taste those joys, unspeakable, constant, eternal, because they are true and simple and in our nature.

But alas! what can my reasoning do against an evil which makes you happy? The tears are in my eyes as I write these words. I did really and truly believe that a few months given to this passionate conjugal love would bring you back to a reasonable sense of things, through exhaustion of the sentiment; but I see you are insatiable, — after killing a lover you will now kill love. Adieu, dear misguided one; I despair of helping you, since the letter in which I strove so hard to bring you to the true life of woman in the social sphere, by a picture of my happiness, has only served to glorify the egotism of your existence. Yes, there is nought but yourself in your love, and you love Gaston far more for yourself than for him.

LIV.

MADAME GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

May 20.

Renée! the blow has come — no, it has fallen upon your poor Louise with the rapidity of a thunderbolt. For me, you know well, that blow is doubt. Conviction would be death.

Two days ago, after my morning toilet, I looked everywhere for Gaston to take a little walk before breakfast. I could not find him. At last I went to the stable, and there I saw his mare covered with sweat; the groom was scraping off the clots of foam with a knife before rubbing her down.

"Who has put Fedelta in such a state?" I asked.

"Monsieur," replied the boy.

I saw the mud of Paris, which is not the least like country mud on the mare's legs. "He has been to Paris!" I thought. That thought brought a thousand others rushing into my heart, and all my blood flew there. To go to Paris without telling me, at the very hour when I always left him alone; to rush there and get back with such rapidity that Fedelta was almost foundered! Suspicion tightened its awful belt around me so that I could scarcely breathe. I walked a few

yards away, and sat down on a bench to try and recover my self-possession.

Gaston found me thus, livid, and doubtless alarming; for he cried out, "What is the matter?" so hurriedly, and in a tone of voice of such anxiety, that I rose and took his arm. But my knees gave way under me, and I was compelled to sit down again. Then he took me in his arms and carried me into the parlor, for we were close to the house, and there the terrified servants followed us. But Gaston sent them all away with a motion of his hand. When we were alone I was able to rise, and, without saying a word, I went to my chamber, where I locked myself in to weep at my ease. Gaston stood at the door two hours listening to my sobs, and asking his poor creature questions with the patience of an angel; but I did not answer them. All I said was: —

"I will see you when my eyes are less red and my voice does not tremble."

He darted out of the house. I bathed my eyes in cold water, and my face; then after a time I opened the door and found him outside, although I had not heard his step in returning.

"What is the matter?" he asked again.

"Nothing," I said; "I saw the mud of Paris on Fedelta's legs; and I could not understand why you went there without telling me; but you are free."

"Your punishment for your doubts shall be," he said, "to wait until to-morrow for an explanation."

"Look me in the eyes," I said. I plunged mine into his; the infinite penetrated the infinite. No, I did not see that cloud which infidelity brings into the soul, and which must inevitably dim the clearness of the pupils.

I pretended to be satisfied; but I was not. Men know, as we do, how to lie and to deceive.

Since then we have not been parted for a moment. Oh, dearest, as I look at him I feel myself indissolubly bound to him. An inward trembling shakes me when he returns into the room after leaving me for a moment. My life is in him and not in myself. I am giving cruel denials to your cruel letter. Never did I feel this dependence on the being of another with my sacred Spaniard, to whom I was what this cruel child now is to me. How I hate that mare! How foolish I have been to keep horses at all! But alas! I should have to cut off Gaston's feet or lock him into the Chalet. Such stupid thoughts as these fill my mind; you can therefore judge how beside myself I am. If love is not cage enough no power can keep a man who wearies of his life.

"Do I weary you?" I said to him plainly.

"How you torment yourself about nothing," he answered, with his eyes full of tender pity; "I have never loved you as I do now."

"If that is true," I replied, "let me sell Fedelta."

"Sell her," he said.

The words crushed me; Gaston seemed to say, "You are the rich one; I have nothing; my will does not exist." If he did not think that, I believed he thought it; and again I left him and went to bed, for it was late at night.

Oh! Renée, in solitude a heart-rending thought may lead to suicide. These delicious gardens, that starry night, the cool breeze wafting me the incense of our flowers, our valley, our woodland heights — all, all seemed to me gloomy, black, a desert! I was, as it were, at the foot of a precipice, among serpents and poisonous plants; I could see no God in Heaven. After such a night a woman is old.

"Take Fedelta and ride to Paris," I said to him the next morning, "We will not sell her; I love her, for she carries you."

He was not deceived; there was anger in my voice, though I tried to conceal it.

"Have confidence in me," he answered, holding out his hand with so noble an action and giving me at the same time so noble a look that I felt myself abased.

"How petty I am!" I cried.

"No," he said, "you love me, that is all;" and he pressed me to him.

"Go to Paris without me," I said, in order to make him feel I gave up all suspicion.

He went; I thought he would have stayed! I can never tell you what I suffered. There was in me another myself who I did not know existed. These scenes, my dearest, have a tragic solemnity for a woman who loves, which cannot be expressed in words. The whole of life seems to be in that passing moment; the eye sees no other horizon; a mere nothing is all, a glance is a book, words are ice, in a motion of the lips we read our death. I expected a return; for my own act was noble and grand.

I ran to the roof of the Chalet to follow him with my eyes along the road. Ah! my dear Renée, I saw him disappear with frightful rapidity.

"How he rides!" I thought, involuntarily.

Once more alone, I fell back into the hell of suspicion, into the tumult of conjecture. At times the certainty of betrayal seemed to me a balm compared to the agony of doubt. Doubt is our duel with ourselves, and we give ourselves fearful wounds. I walked about, I roamed the paths, I returned to the Chalet; then I started again like a mad-woman.

Gaston left me at seven in the morning and he did not return till eleven. Now as it takes but half an hour to reach Paris by the park of Saint-Cloud and the Bois de Boulogne, it is plain that he must have been three hours in the city.

He came in gayly, bringing me a riding-whip made of india-rubber and mounted with a gold handle. For the last two weeks I had been without a whip, mine being old and broken.

"So this is why you have tortured me?" I said, admiring the workmanship of the handle, in which there was a vinaigrette.

I fully understood that the gift concealed some new deception; but nevertheless I threw myself on his breast and made him tender reproaches for letting me torment myself for such a trifle. He thought he had done a clever thing. I saw in his whole manner, in his eye, the sort of inward satisfaction men feel when they have succeeded in deceiving others; a gleam seems to escape their soul, a flash from their mind is reflected on their features, and shaken from them with the movements of the body. While admiring the pretty thing I asked him suddenly, at a moment when we were looking at each other face to face: —

"Who designed this work of art for you?"

"An artist, a friend of mine."

"Ah! — and Verdier mounted it," I added, reading the name of the jeweller, which was engraved on the whip.

Gaston is nothing but a child, and he blushed. I rewarded him with caresses for being ashamed of deceiving me. I played the innocent; and he thought the whole affair had blown over.

May 25th.

The next morning by six I was in my riding-habit, and I reached Verdier's at seven, where I saw several whips of the same pattern as mine. A clerk recognized mine when I showed it to him.

"We sold it yesterday to a gentleman," he said, describing Gaston exactly.

I could have no doubt that it was he. I will not tell you how my heart throbbed in going to Paris and during this little scene. When Gaston woke at eight o'clock he found me fresh and dainty in my morning dress, walking about among my flowers with deceitful indifference; I was certain that nothing had betrayed my absence, for no one knew of it but my old Philippe.

"Gaston," I said, as we walked round the pond, "I know perfectly well the difference there is between a work of art, unique in itself, which would have taken time to design for a friend, and one which has been cast in a mould."

Gaston turned pale and gazed at me as I drew forth the accusing gift.

"My friend," I said, "this is not a whip; it is a screen behind which you hide a secret."

Thereupon, my dear, I gave myself the atrocious pleasure of getting him involved in a labyrinth of lies and deceptions from which he could not escape, though he displayed an amazing cleverness in trying to find a

wall to scale. He was compelled, however, to stand his ground before an adversary who consented after a time to let him think he had convinced her. But this compliance came too late, as it always does in such scenes. I had committed the fault against which my mother had tried to warn me. By laying bare my jealousy I had as good as declared war and its stratagems against Gaston. My dear, jealousy is essentially stupid and blundering.

So then I vowed to myself to suffer in silence, to watch everything, to obtain certainty, and if my suspicions were confirmed, either to make an end of everything between me and Gaston, or consent to my misfortune; there is no other course of conduct for women brought up as we have been.

What is he hiding from me? for he *is* hiding something. The secret must concern some woman. Is it some youthful affair for which he blushes? What is it? Ah, Renée, that *What* is engraved in four letters of fire upon everything. I read that fatal word on the mirror of my pond, among my trees, in the clouds of the sky, on the ceilings, at our meals, in the very flowers of my carpet. When I sleep a voice cries to me, "*What?*"

Since that day there has been in our life a torturing interest; I have the bitterest, the most acrid thoughts that ever corroded a woman's heart — to belong to a

man whom we believe to be unfaithful! Oh, dearest, my present life is hell and heaven both. I have never before set foot in this fiery furnace — I, until now so sacredly adored.

June.

Since the day of which I wrote last, Gaston, instead of working lazily, with the ease of a rich artist who pets his work, sets himself tasks to accomplish, like a writer who lives by his pen. He employs four hours every day in actual toil and has finished two of his plays.

"He wants money!"

That thought is whispered to me by an inward voice. He spends almost nothing. We live in such absolute confidence that there is not a corner in his study that my eyes and my fingers have not penetrated. His expenditures have never reached two thousand francs a year, and I knew that he had thirty thousand francs, not so much laid by, as simply placed in a drawer in his room. You will know what I did. I rose in the night and went, while he slept, to see if the money were still there. The chill of death seized me when I found it gone!

That same week I discovered that he goes to Sèvres for his letters, and he must destroy them as soon as read, for although I am as inventive as Figaro, I have never yet found a trace of them. Alas! my Renée, in

spite of all the fine vows I made to myself apropos of the riding-whip, an impulse of my soul, which I must call madness, drove me into following Gaston one day in one of his rapid rides to the post-office. He was terrified when I found him on horseback paying the postage on a letter he held in his hand. After looking at me fixedly for a moment, he put Fedelta to a gallop and rode home so rapidly that I was utterly exhausted on reaching the gate, though I hardly felt the bodily fatigue, my soul was so tortured.

Once there, Gaston said nothing; he rang and waited, but did not speak to me. I was more dead than alive. Either I was right, or I was wrong, but in either case my spying was unworthy of Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu. I had rolled in the social gutter below even a grisette, side-by-side with courtesans, actresses, creatures without education. What sufferings!

At last the gate opened; he gave his horse to a groom, and I dismounted — but into his arms; he held them out to me. I took up my riding-habit on my left arm, and gave him my right; we walked on — still silent. The hundred steps we made may be counted for me as a hundred years of purgatory. At each step a thousand thoughts, almost visible, hovered in tongues of flame before my eyes, and darted into my soul, with each a fang, a different venom! When the groom

and the horses were out of sight, I stopped Gaston; I looked at him, and said, pointing to the letter which he still held unopened in his right hand: —

"Let me read it?"

He gave it to me; I unsealed it, and read a letter in which Raoul Nathan, the dramatic author, told him that one of our plays, received, studied, and rehearsed, would be acted on the following Saturday. The letter contained the tickets for a box.

Though to me this was like passing from martyrdom to heaven, the devil still cried to me, to trouble my joy, "Where are those thirty thousand francs?" But dignity, honor, all my *old self* forbade me to ask the question. It was on my lips; but I knew if the thought became language I must throw myself into the pond; and I resisted, with difficulty, the desire to speak. Oh! dearest, I suffered then something beyond the strength of woman to bear.

"You are wearying of this place, my poor Gaston," I said. "If you like, we will return to Paris."

"Return to Paris! why?" he said. "I merely wanted to know if I really have talent, and quaff a little of the punch of success."

Some day when he is at work I may perhaps play surprise when I look into his drawer and miss the money. But even so, shall I not tempt the answer "I lent it to such a one"? A man with presence of

mind like Gaston will surely say that or something like it.

My dear Renée, the outcome of this is that the great success of the play which all Paris is now running after belongs to us; though Nathan has all the glory, for our names are not given; I am only one of the stars which appear in the bills as "And M M. * * * ." I saw the first representation hidden in a proscenium box on the ground-floor.

July 1.

Gaston still works hard and still goes to Paris. He works at his plays to have an excuse to go there, and also to make money. We have three plays accepted and two more ordered. Oh! my dear, I am lost; I walk in darkness. I would burn my house if that would give me light. What is the meaning of Gaston's conduct? Is he ashamed of receiving money from me? His soul is too lofty to concern itself with such trifles. Besides, when a man begins to admit such scruples they are inspired in him by some condition of his heart. He will accept all things from the wife he loves, but he will take nothing from the wife he thinks of leaving or no longer loves. If he wants so much money it *must* be to spend it on a woman; if he wanted it only for himself he would take it from my purse without hesitation. He knows we have a hundred thousand francs laid by.

Thus, my own Renée, I have gone through the whole world of suppositions, and I have come to the conclusion, all things fairly considered, that I have a rival. He leaves me, for whom? I am resolved to *see her*.

July 10.

I have seen. I am lost. Yes, Renée, at thirty years of age, in all the prime of my beauty, rich with the resources of my mind, fresh, elegant, I am betrayed; and for whom? For an Englishwoman with big feet, and big bones, and a huge bosom, — a British cow! I cannot doubt it. Here is what happened lately.

Weary with doubt, jealous of Gaston's work, uneasy at his perpetual trips to Paris, I took some measures; and these measures made me degrade myself so low that I cannot tell you what they were. Three days ago I learned that when Gaston rides to Paris he goes to a house in the rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, where his loves are guarded by a discretion that is very unusual in Paris. The porter, evidently no talker, said little, but enough to reduce me to despair. I then resolved to sacrifice my life; all I wanted was to know all.

I took an apartment in Paris in the house directly opposite to that where Gaston goes, and I saw him with my own eyes ride into the courtyard on horseback. Too soon, too soon, I had a horrible, a dreadful revelation. This Englishwoman, who seemed to me about

thirty-six years of age, calls herself Madame Gaston. This discovery was like a death-blow to me. Next, I saw her going to the Tuileries with two children! Oh, Renée! two boys who are the living miniatures of Gaston. It is impossible not to be struck with so scandalous a resemblance. And such beautiful children! dressed with that magnificence with which Englishwomen dress their boys.

She has given him children! Ah! that explains all. This Englishwoman is a species of Greek statue come down from some pedestal; she has the whiteness and the coldness of marble; she walks pompously like a happy mother; she is beautiful, — yes, I must own that, — but she is heavy and clumsy as a line-of-battle ship. There is nothing refined or distinguished about her. Assuredly, she is not a lady; she is the daughter of some small farmer in a remote county, or the eleventh child of some poor minister.

I returned from Paris half-dead. As I rode back thoughts assailed me like demons. Can she be married to him? Did he know her before he married me? Was she the deserted mistress of some rich man, whom Gaston has suddenly met with? — but no, there were those children! I made suppositions without number, as if any were needed in presence of those children. The next day I returned to Paris, and found excuses enough to give the porter some money, and ask one

question: "Is Madame Gaston legally married?" To which he replied: —

"Yes, mademoiselle."

July 15.

My dear Renée, — Ever since that fatal morning I have redoubled in love for Gaston, and I find him more loving than ever; he is so young. Twenty times, when I rise in the morning, I have been on the point of saying to him: "You love me as well as you do that woman in the rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, don't you?"

I dare not explain to myself the meaning of my own submission.

"You love children?" I said to him one day.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "and we will have them."

"But how?"

"I have consulted doctors, and they all advise me to travel for a few months."

"Gaston," I said, "I could not love an absent man; if I could, I should have stayed in the convent all my days."

He began to laugh; but as for me, the very word *journey* stabbed me to the heart. Oh! surely, I'd rather jump from a window and be killed at once than roll down the staircase, clutching at every step.

Adieu, my darling; my death will be gentle, elegant, but sure. I made my will yesterday. You may come and see me now; the blockade is raised. My death,

like my life, shall be marked by distinction and grace. I will die my whole self.

Farewell, dear sister-soul, — you, whose affection has known no repelling, no ups, no downs, but like the equable shining of the moon, has ever soothed my heart. You and I may not have known the ardor of love, but neither have we tasted its poisonous bitterness. You have seen life wisely.

Farewell.

LV.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

July 17.

My dear Louise, — I send this letter by a messenger before I am able to go to the Chalet myself. Be calm. Your last words seem to me so insane that I thought I did right, under the circumstances, in confiding everything to Louis. It was a matter of saving you from yourself.

If, like you, we have employed bad means, the result is so good that I am certain of your approval. I even went so low as to employ the police. But do not be anxious; this will remain a secret between the prefect and ourselves and you. Gaston is an angel. Here are the facts: —

His brother, Louis Gaston, died in Calcutta, in the service of a mercantile company, ruined financially at the very moment when he was about to return to France, rich, happy, and married. He had obtained a brilliant fortune through his marriage with the widow of an English merchant, after working for ten years to support himself and provide for his brother Marie, whom he idolized, and to whom he never wrote of his trials and disappointments, fearing to distress him. Just as he was about to return home prosperous and happy, he was overtaken by the failure of the famous house of Halmer. His wife's property was all in it, and she was ruined. The blow was so terrible that Louis Gaston went almost beside himself. The mental faculties, breaking down, affected his physical strength, and he died, as I said, in Bengal, where he had gone to try to rescue some shreds of his poor wife's fortune.

While prosperous, this dear, good captain had placed in the hands of a banker the sum of three hundred thousand francs for transmission to his brother; but this banker was dragged down by the Halmer failure and that last resource was taken from them. The widow of Louis Gaston, the beautiful woman whom you think your rival, is in Paris with two children (your nephews), and without a sou. Her jewels sufficed only to pay the passages of her family from India. Madame Louis went to the address of your husband's former lodgings. As he had

not left word where he was going, the people of the house referred her to Daniel d'Arthèz as the person most likely to give her information.

D'Arthèz generously provided for the immediate wants of the young widow. It seems that the captain had written to d'Arthèz at the time of his marriage, knowing him to be Marie's best friend, asking him how he could best send that large sum of money safely to his young brother. D'Arthèz replied that Marie Gaston had lately become rich through his marriage with the Baronne de Macumer.

On the arrival of the widow, d'Arthèz naturally wrote to your husband and told him the condition in which his sister-in-law and nephews were; and he also told him of the generous intentions of Louis Gaston and his wife toward him, which were only frustrated by ill-luck. Your dear Gaston, as you can well imagine, rushed to Paris. That is the cause and history of the first morning ride. During the last three years he had laid aside fifty thousand francs out of the sums you had forced him to take; and he now invested them in the Funds in his nephews' names, obtaining twelve hundred francs a year for each of them. He also took and furnished the apartment in which your sister-in-law lives; and he promised her three thousand francs every month for her expenses. This is the cause and history of the disappearance of that money, of his work for the

theatres, and of his great pleasure at the success of his first piece. You see now that Madame Gaston is not your rival, and bears your name legitimately.

A man as noble and as sensitive as Gaston concealed this from you, fearing your generosity. Your husband has never looked upon your means as his own. D'Arthèz read me a letter which he wrote to him at the time he asked him to be one of the witnesses of your marriage. In it, Marie Gaston said that his happiness would be complete if he had had no debts he was forced to let you pay, and if he could be rich himself. A virgin soul cannot prevent itself from having such feelings. They exist, or they do not exist; when they do exist their delicacy and their exactions are conceivable. It is thus quite simple that Gaston wished to do what was needful for his brother's widow and children himself, without calling upon you; especially when that widow had set apart for him three hundred thousand francs of her own fortune.

I have seen her; she is beautiful, she has a heart, her manners are distinguished, but she is not clever. The woman is a mother; is not that as good as telling you I took to her the instant I saw her with a child at her side, and another in her arms dressed like the baby of an English lord? *All for my children* is written upon her and upon everything about her.

So, my Louise, instead of being angry with your

Gaston, you may now have fresh reasons to love him. I have seen him. He is the most charming young man in all Paris. Ah yes, dear child, I can well comprehend that a woman should adore him; he has the countenance of his soul.

If I were you, I should take the widow and her children to the Chalet and build them a delightful little cottage near by; you could make the children your own. Therefore, dearest, be calm and happy; and give Gaston in your turn a surprise.

LVI.

MADAME GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

Ah! my beloved Renée, hear the terrible, fatal, insolent words which that imbecile Lafayette said to his king: It is too late! Oh! my life, my beautiful life! no physician can give it back to me. Death has struck me. Alas! was I not born an ignis fatuus of a woman, destined to be extinguished as I shone? Torrents of tears are pouring from my eyes, but — I can only weep apart from *him*; I flee him, but he seeks me. My despair is all within my soul. Dante forgot my torment in his Hell.

Come and see me die.

LVII.

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO THE COMTE DE L'ESTORADE.

THE CHALET, August 7.

MY DEAR HUSBAND, — Take the children and go to Provence without me; I stay here with Louise, who has only a short time to live. I owe myself to her and to her husband, who will go mad, I think.

Since receiving that last letter which made me fly to Ville d'Avray with the physicians, I have not left her for a moment, and I could not write to you sooner, for this is the fifteenth night I have watched with her.

When I arrived I found her with Gaston, beautiful as ever and exquisitely dressed, her face all smiles and happiness, — sublime deception! These two beautiful children had told each other all. For a moment I, like Gaston, was the dupe of her artifice; but Louise presently wrung my hand and whispered: —

"I must deceive him, I am dying."

An icy chill came over me as I felt the burning heat of her hand and saw the flush in her cheeks. I was glad then of my own prudence, for, not wishing to alarm any one, I had asked the physicians who came with me to walk about the shrubbery for a while until I sent for them.

"Leave us now," she said to Gaston. "Two women who meet after a separation of five years have many secrets to tell each other; I know Renée has much to say to me."

Once alone, she flung herself in my arms unable to restrain her tears.

"But what is the matter?" I said. "I have brought you, in any case, the head-surgeon and the chief physician of the Hôtel-Dieu, together with Bianchon and another doctor; there are four of them."

"Oh! if they could only save me!" she cried. "There may be time; let them come! The same feeling that drove me to die will help me to live."

"But what have you done?"

"I have destroyed my lungs"

"How?"

"I put myself in perspirations at night, and then went to the shores of the pond and stood in the dew and mist. Gaston thinks I have a cold, but I am dying."

"Send Gaston to Paris on some errand," I said, "and I will bring the doctors."

I was almost out of my mind when I went to fetch them from the wood where I had left them.

Alas, my dear friend, when the consultation was over not one of those learned men would give me the slightest hope; they think she will go at the fall of the

leaves. Louise must die. The constitution of the dear creature has singularly served her purpose. She had, it seems, a tendency to the malady she has developed. She might have lived long, but the work of a few days has made her condition hopeless. I cannot tell you what I felt on listening to this judgment, which they carefully explained to me. You know that I have lived in Louise almost as much as in myself. I was overcome; I could not even take leave of those cruel men. Bathed in tears, I passed I know not how much time in painful meditation. A celestial voice roused me from my torpor.

"Well, I am doomed!" she said, laying her hand on my shoulder.

She made me rise and took me into her little salon.

"You will not leave me, will you?" she said with a supplicating look. "I wish so much not to see despair about me; above all, I wish to deceive *him*, and I shall have the strength to do it. I am full of energy and youth, and I will die standing. I am not sorry for myself; I die as I wished to die — at thirty, young, beautiful, and still *myself*. As for him, I should have made him unhappy; I see that. I am caught in the meshes of my love, like a doe struggling in the net, impatient at being held; I am the doe — and a very wild one. My groundless jealousy has already wounded his heart and made it suffer. The day when my sus-

picions found him indifferent — the inevitable return for jealousy — well, I should have died then. I have had my account with life. There are some who see sixty years' service on the muster-roll of the world who have never really lived two years; whereas I, though I am only thirty, have known sixty years of love. So, for him, for me, this end is happiness. But for you and me, my Renée, it is another thing; you lose a sister who loves you, and the loss is irreparable. You, alone, have cause to mourn my death."

She was silent for a long time; I could not speak, I could only see her through a veil of tears; then she said: "My death conveys a cruel lesson. My dear philosopher in petticoats was right. Marriage should not have passion for its basis — nor even love. Your life, my Renée, is a fine one; you have walked in the right path, loving your Louis more and more as you advanced, whereas by resting conjugal love on excessive ardor it must decrease. I have twice been wrong; and twice death strikes my happiness with its fleshless hand. It robbed me of the noblest, the most devoted of men; and to-day it tears me from the most beautiful, the most poetic husband woman ever had. But then, I have known the beau ideal, the perfection, of the soul, and that of the outward form. In Felipe, the soul mastered the body and transformed it; in Gaston, the heart. the mind, and the beauty are equal rivals. I

die adored — what more can I wish? Yes, to reconcile myself with God, whom, perhaps, I have too little thought of — to him I will spring, full of love, praying him to give me back my two angels in his heaven. Without them, paradise would be a desert to me. My example would be fatal; I am an exception. It is impossible to meet with many Felipes and Gastons; social law is here in harmony with natural law. Yes, woman is a feeble being, who ought in marriage to make the sacrifice of her will to that of the man, who ought in return to make her the sacrifice of his egoism. The rebellion our sex has lately raised and the complaints it utters with so much noise are silly blunders, and make us deserve the name of children which philosophers have given us."

And so she continued, in that sweet voice you know; making wise reflections in her own peculiar way, until Gaston returned, bringing with him his sister-in-law, her children, and their English nurse, whom Louise had asked him to go and fetch.

"See my pretty executioners!" she whispered to me as the children came in. "Was I mistaken? Are they not the image of their uncle?"

She was charming to Madame Louis Gaston, begging her to regard the Chalet as her own home, and doing its honors with those Chaulieu manners she possesses in the highest degree.

I wrote at once to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, the Duc de Rhétoré, and the Duc de Lenoncourt, also to Madeleine. I did well; for the next day Louise was unable to take a walk, in fact she did not rise till just in time to join us at dinner. Madeleine de Lenoncourt, the two brothers, and her mother arrived that evening. The coolness on the part of the family which Louise produced by her marriage has all passed away.

Since then the two brothers and the Duc de Chaulieu come out on horseback every morning, and the two duchesses spend all their evenings at the Chalet. Death unites as much as it separates; and it silences all petty passions. Louise is resplendent in grace and sense, and charm of soul and sensibility. To the last she shows that exquisite taste for which she is famed, and pours out for us the treasures of a mind which made her one of the queens of Paris.

"I want to be lovely even in my coffin," she said to me with that smile which is hers alone, as I put her to bed, where she has now languished for the last two weeks. There is not a trace of illness in her rooms; the medicines, drinks, etc., the whole medical apparatus is out of sight.

"I am making a good death, am I not?" she said to the rector of Sèvres, to whom she has given her confidence.

We cling to her and enjoy her like misers. Gaston,

who is now enlightened by our anxiety and prepared for the worst, is not wanting in courage, but he is vitally affected; and I should not be surprised if he followed his wife to the grave. Yesterday he said to me as we walked round the sheet of water before the house: —

"I ought to be the father of those children," pointing to his sister-in-law, who was at a little distance with his nephews. "I will never do anything to take me out of the world, but should it happen that I die, promise me that you will be a second mother to them, and that you will let your husband accept the guardianship which I intend to confide to him conjointly with my sister-in-law."

He said that without the least emotion and in the tone of a man who feels himself lost. His face replies with smiles to the smiles of his wife; I alone am not deceived by them. He displays a courage equal to hers. Louise wished to see her godson; but I was not sorry to tell her he was in Provence; she might have made him some liberal gift which would have pained me.

Adieu, my dear friend.

August 25 (her fête-day).

Last evening Louise was, for a short time only, delirious; but it was a graceful delirium, which proves that persons of mind do not become mad or foolish like common natures. She sang in a faint voice a few

Italian airs from the "Puritani" and "Somnambula" and "Moïse." We stood silently around her bed; even the Duc de Rhétoré had tears in his eyes, for it was evident that her soul was departing thus. She no longer saw us! but still there was all her natural grace and charm in that feeble song and in her divine gentleness.

Her last agony began during the night. At seven in the morning I lifted her from her bed myself; she had recovered some strength, and wished to be seated at her window. She asked for Gaston's hand. And then the loveliest angel we shall ever see upon this earth had left us nothing but her mortal remains.

The last sacraments had been administered to her the evening before, unknown to Gaston, who had gone to snatch a little sleep at that moment. She asked me to read to her in French the *De profundis,* while she sat there face to face with the beautiful nature she had created. She repeated mentally the words, clasping the hand of her husband who was kneeling beside her.

August 26.

My heart is broken. I have just seen her in her shroud; she is pale, with violet tints. Oh! my children, I want my children! Bring my children to me!

THE END.

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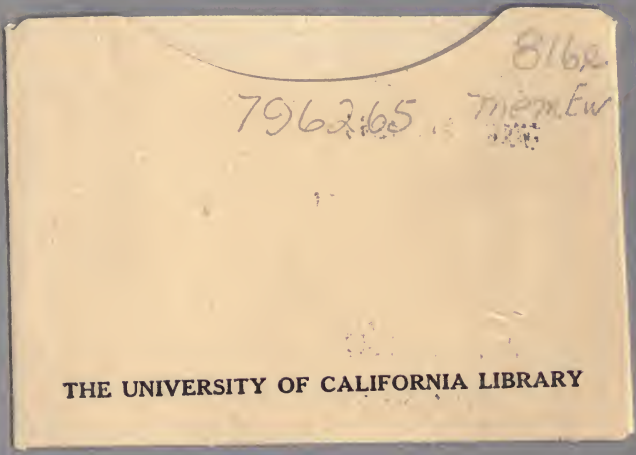
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